

Journal of the Royal Society of Arts

NO. 4989

FRIDAY, 26TH OCTOBER, 1956

VOL. CIV

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER, at 2.30 p.m. INAUGURAL ADDRESS. '*Whither Design? a Layman's View*', by R. W. Holland, O.B.E., M.A., M.Sc., LL.D., Chairman of the Council of the Society. Silver medals awarded to lecturers last Session will afterwards be presented by the Chairman, and tea will then be served in the Library.

TUESDAY 13TH NOVEMBER, at 5.15 p.m. COMMONWEALTH SECTION. '*Chemistry and the Sugar Cane*', by Professor L. F. Wiggins, D.Sc., Ph.D., F.R.I.C., Director of Sugar Research, Department of Sugar Chemistry and Technology, Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, Trinidad. Sir John Simonsen, D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.I.C., F.R.S., a Member of Council of the Society, in the Chair. (Tea will be served from 4.30 p.m.)

WEDNESDAY, 14TH NOVEMBER, at 2.30 p.m. '*The Commissioning of Works of Art*', by Louis Osman, B.A.(Arch), F.R.I.B.A.

WEDNESDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER, at 2.30 p.m. '*Quacks Through the Ages*', A. Dickson Wright, M.S., M.B., F.R.C.S., immediate Past-President, The Medical Society of London. Sir Charles Dodds, M.V.O., M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S., Courtauld Professor of Biochemistry, University of London at Middlesex Hospital Medical School, in the Chair.

PERILS AND PROSPECTS IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

A Conference under the above title will, as previously announced in the *Journal*, be held at the Society's House on 31st October, 1956. All available tickets have now been issued, but a full report of the Conference will be available in due course when it is published in the *Journal*.

SESSIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

A supplement giving a list of the meetings so far arranged for the present Session is included with this issue of the *Journal*.

THE SOCIETY'S CHRISTMAS CARD

An order form for the Society's Christmas Card is included at the end of this issue of the *Journal*. A specimen card can be seen at the Society's House, or sent on request.

MEETING OF COUNCIL

A meeting of Council was held on Monday, 8th October, 1956. Present: Dr. R. W. Holland (in the Chair); Mrs. Mary Adams; Sir Alfred Bossom; Sir Edward Crowe; Sir Charles Dodds; Sir Ernest Goodale; Mr. John Glog; Sir William Halcrow; The Earl of Halsbury; Lord Latham; Sir Harry Lindsay; Mr. F. A. Mercer; Mr. Oswald P. Milne; Lord Nathan; Sir William Ogg; The Earl of Radnor; Mr. E. Munro Runtz; Sir Harold Saunders; Sir Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke; Professor L. Dudley Stamp; Sir Stephen Tallents; Mr. G. E. Tonge; Dr. Barnes Wallis and Sir Griffith Williams; with Mr. K. W. Luckhurst (Secretary); Mr. R. V. C. Cleveland-Stevens (Deputy Secretary) and Mr. David Lea (Assistant Secretary).

ELECTIONS

The following candidates, whose applications have been received since the last meeting in July, were duly elected Fellows of the Society:

Acikalin, His Excellency Mehmet Cevat, Rome, Italy.
 Ashton, Alfred Robin, Dimple, Lancs.
 Ashton, Thomas Richard, M.Sc., Ph.D., London.
 Barnes, William, Mombasa, East Africa.
 Bartram, Walter John, Foxbar, Renfrewshire.
 Becker, Edward Lionel, B.A., F.C.A., Southport, Lancs.
 Birchall, Mrs. Beatrice Mary, Marple, Cheshire.
 Brown, John Huntington, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex.
 Burbury, Arthur Vivian, M.C., M.A., London.
 Campbell, John Kerr, Ayr.
 Cassad, Jal Pestonjee, B.E., B.Sc., A.M.I.E., Nagpur, India.
 Chan Fook Hon, Klang, Selangor, Malaya.
 Chapman, Horace Bernard, Horley, Surrey.
 Cockerell, Sydney Morris, Letchworth, Herts.
 Condliffe, George Edward, O.B.E., B.Sc., M.I.E.E., Oxford.
 Crookall, Arthur Lawrence, B.Arch., A.R.I.B.A., London.
 Darwin, William, Ascot Vale, Victoria, Australia.
 de Guingand, Major-General Sir Francis Wilfred, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., Johannesburg, South Africa.
 Downes, Gerald Frederick, Erith, Kent.
 Durrant, John Eugene, B.A., B.Paed., Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
 Dyson, John Morris, Manchester.
 Earle, Denis St. John, Gildersome, Yorks.
 Eiriksson, Helgi Hermann, B.Sc., A.R.T.C., Reykjavik, Iceland.
 Emmerson, Thomas, B.Sc., Ph.D., Trysull, Staffs.
 Farrell, Patrick Hugh, London.

Fearn, Detmar Avila, Wellington, New Zealand.
 Folley, E. William, A.C.P., Colne, Lancs.
 Ford, Peter, LL.B., London.
 Forester, Maurice Alwyn Pitts, Hull, Yorks.
 Garth, John, San Francisco, California, U.S.A.
 Gipps, Miss Ruth Dorothy Louisa, D.Mus., St. Margarets, Middx.
 Gorman, Alexander, A.M.I.Mech.E., Edinburgh.
 Grantchester, The Right Honble. Lord, O.B.E., M.A., F.C.I.I., London.
 Grantchester, The Right Honble. Lady, London.
 Greaves, William George Leslie, Sutton Coldfield, Warwicks.
 Guion, Miss Molly, New Rochelle, New York, U.S.A.
 Hampson, John, F.R.I.C.S., Prestatyn, Flintshire.
 Hancock, Vernon Scott, Maidstone, Kent.
 Harman-Powell, David Harold, Edgbaston, Birmingham.
 Havard-Williams, Peter, M.A., Dip.Ed., A.L.A., Liverpool.
 Hubble, Malcolm James, London.
 Jennett, Seán, Woking, Surrey.
 Kellett, Arthur Barrie, Birstall, Yorks.
 Kennerley, George Randall, Hoylake, Cheshire.
 Laschinger, Edgar Frederick, B.Sc., M.E., Johannesburg, South Africa.
 Lederhofer, Rudolf Victor, B.Sc., Hong Kong.
 Leeson, Ralph George, Oxford.
 Levin, Nyman, B.Sc., Ph.D., A.R.C.S., Surbiton, Surrey.
 McCloud, Donald, B.Sc., Edgware, Middx.
 McIntosh, Iain Angus, D.A., Kilmarnock, Ayrshire.
 MacManaway, Lancelot Arthur, M.A., Loughborough, Leics.
 Middleton, Frederick Tabor, Mitcham, Surrey.
 Miller, F. John, A.T.D., Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.
 Morgan, James Squire Woodward, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.
 Mowat, James Mowat, B.Sc., F.I.M., Glasgow.
 Nixon, John Humphrey Russell, M.I.Mech.E., M.I.E.E., Nanpantan, Leics.
 Ng Kong Choon, Peter, Klang, Selangor, Malaya.
 Patel, Jashbhai P., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., Salford, Lancs.
 Pearson, Kenneth George, Hull, Yorks.
 Pescott, Richard Thomas Martin, M.Agr.Sc., Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.
 Reynish, Roy Lewis, F.R.I.B.A., Southsea, Hants.
 Roby, Geoffrey Frederick, Southport, Lancs.
 Ross, Herbert Reginald, F.R.I.B.A., London.
 Ryan, William Francis, A.B., M.M.E., D.Sc., Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.
 Senior, Arthur Edward, A.T.D., Sheffield, Yorks.
 Smith, Alan, Hounslow, Middx.
 Smith, Maurice Joy, O.B.E., B.Sc., M.I.E.E., Sarratt, Herts.
 Smith, Ralph Augustus, London.
 Spencer, Richard Hugh Houghton, London.
 Spear, Peter, B.Eng., Wolverhampton, Staffs.
 Stephenson, Henry, South Croydon, Surrey.
 Stubbs, Harry, A.M.I.Mech.E., A.M.I.E.E., Larnaca, Cyprus.
 Sugden, Ernest Henry Darrall, A.T.I., Leicester.
 Tibble, Cyril Frank, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.
 Tilford, John Emil, Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.
 Walker, Michael Ernest John, Sidcup, Kent.
 Walker, William, F.A.C.C.A., J.P., Gerrards Cross, Bucks.
 Watkins, William Reginald, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.
 Wauchop, William Simon, M.A., Wellington, New Zealand.

Weaver, Lionel James, A.R.I.B.A., London.
Webster, George Gordon MacWhirter, Glasgow.
Williams, Aneurin Rhys, M.A., LL.B., Pendre, Brecon.
Williams, Norman Glyn, B.Arch, Wirral, Cheshire.
Williamson, George William, O.B.E., M.C., M.I.C.E., M.I.Mech.E., M.I.E.E.,
Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The following were elected Associate Members:

Hayes, William James, Cork, Ireland.
Holmes, Miss Mary, London. (Examinations Silver Medallist.)
Langmaid, Miss Mary Rose, Bath, Somerset. (Examinations Silver Medallist.)

The following have been admitted as Institutions in Union under Bye-Law 66:

I.C.I. (Merseyside) Scientific Society, Widnes, Lancs.
Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, Italy.
Patriotische Gesellschaft von 1765, Hamburg, Germany.
The Wellcome Foundation, London.

DAME CAROLINE HASLETT

Dame Caroline Haslett, who was the first lady member of the Society's Council, was elected an Honorary Life Fellow under Bye-law 53.

PRESENTATION OF R.D.I. DIPLOMA AND BICENTENARY MEDAL

It was announced that the presentation of the R.D.I. Diploma to Mr. Reynolds Stone and of the Bicentenary Medal to Dr. Worboys would take place at 6 p.m. on Thursday, 13th December, when Sir Gordon Russell would deliver an Address on the subject of 'The Designer's Status in Industry'.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN MEDAL

Designs prepared by Mr. Christopher Ironside for the obverse and reverse of the new Benjamin Franklin Medal were approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

A quantity of financial and other business was transacted.

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CHARACTER ON DESIGN

*A paper by
PAUL REILLY,*

*Deputy Director, Council of Industrial Design, read
to the Society on Wednesday, 6th June, 1956, with
Sir Stephen Tallents, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E.,
a Member of Council of the Society, in the Chair*

THE CHAIRMAN: I should like to introduce our speaker for this afternoon. He has an excellent pedigree. He is the son of Sir Charles Reilly, with whom the name of the School of Architecture at Liverpool, and much else besides, is so honorably associated. It is a good thing to have a pedigree; but it is still more important to have achievements to your credit, and that Mr. Reilly certainly has.

I first came across him by reading in *The Times* a letter which struck me as particularly well written and congenially directed—written either from, or on his return from, America. I think I am right in saying that it pointed out that Americans did honour to business men not less, or perhaps more, than we did to the professions, to the Church, or to the Civil Service. I wrote to him, having no idea that he was Sir Charles Reilly's son, and thus got into touch with him.

He comes to us, of course, fresh from that signal achievement in the Haymarket of which probably all of you have been witnesses: namely, the opening of the Design Centre. That is indeed a unique undertaking. It has given British industry a window upon the world which it has not hitherto possessed; and a window which has already proved its attractive power. Mr. Reilly tells me that already over 100,000 visitors have been into that Centre, which means after all 200,000 eyes—I always like to count eyes in matters of display—and that does not include those who have been window shopping outside. Sir Gordon Russell and he have that splendid achievement to their credit before he comes to give to-day a paper with an authority which really, if one had to select a speaker from the whole country, could not be bettered.

The following paper, which was illustrated with lantern slides, was then read:

THE PAPER

I once climbed with Ilmari Tapiovaara, the Finnish furniture designer, to the top of the thin sky-scraper that towers over the Helsinki stadium. The sky above, which seemed almost within reach, was leaden and heavy; the first snow of winter was already dusting the pavements below. Stretched out before us for mile after mile to the flat horizon was one of the most repetitive landscapes in the world—trees and lakes, woods and water *ad infinitum*. Tapiovaara swept his hand round the compass and exclaimed triumphantly: 'There—that is why I can never leave Finland'. 'And that', I said to myself, 'is why I could never stay there'.

Being on an exploratory mission among Finnish designers, I began making the obvious comparisons between them and us, seeking explanations for their remarkable creations, likening the frequent elongated shapes of their pots and vases to the tall trees that surround them, and coming to the startling conclusion that men and their arts are products of their environment.

I imagine that in tackling my difficult task here the first temptation might be to try some analysis of points and features, some quick sketches of national character—such as that the French are volatile, the Italians amorous, the Germans disciplined, and the English phlegmatic and that therefore their arts and crafts and designs are all of these things in turn.

One might even take these generalizations a stage further and read into French volatility their penchant for *vedettes* or stars in all walks of life, round whom others will cluster, so building a system of splinter parties, each pursuing a different course. This sort of competitive fission was recently explained to me by a prominent French architect as the main reason for the apparent rudderlessness of much contemporary French design.

Similarly, German discipline could, I suppose, be extended to embrace their particular brand of personality culture, more centralized of course and therefore more uniform, while to our own British phlegm might be traced our leanings towards anonymity in design, our suspicion of individual genius and our upholding of the team spirit—for which, to my knowledge, there is no translation in either French or German. But Dr. Pevsner, on one front at least, has already thoroughly explored this ground, ingeniously proving the Englishness of almost everything English and also the force of that ancient mystery that exceptions only prove the rule.

I know that there is a mass of evidence on the side of folk lore and that many scholars have written learned volumes on national traditions in the arts, but whether any of them have really identified the influence of national character on design, as apart from the influence of climate, geography, religion or society I very much doubt.

I know, too, that commercially there is much wishful thinking on this subject. One often hears from our own industrialists the plea for designs that are essentially British but yet recognizably of this century. I remember several years ago one of our great electrical engineering companies sending a couple of their young designers to Scandinavia to study new trends in domestic lighting and a few months later unveiling a collection of derivative designs with the proud boast that they had achieved a really national interpretation of an international idiom.

There is, of course, commercial commonsense in such ambitions. Indeed our inherited skills and equipment in many industries make a national variant on an international theme almost a matter of survival. In carpets and crystal, for instance, our manufacturers are faced with appalling problems of maintaining the labour and the machines on which their prosperity was founded, but for which current international tastes seem to offer little scope. These commitments, however, are scarcely expressions of national character,

but rather of the national economy as it has developed in the course of past generations. I personally question the value of exploring national character as such in this context, for we live in a hybrid world with only isolated pockets of pure stock, and these are themselves often much exaggerated. The blond, blue-eyed stereotype is by no means universal in Sweden; in fact, in some areas he is in a clear minority.

Nordic, Alpine, East Baltic and Mediterranean are easy generalizations based on superficial resemblances, but it is dangerous to jump to conclusions on the basis of a few outward characteristics that happen to have a high social attraction. Popular impressions about national character or racial temperament are as fragile and fickle as an electoral majority. An American anthropologist once drew attention to the market fluctuations in accepted judgments on races and nations. In 1935 for instance, most Americans characterized the Japanese as progressive, intelligent, industrious; seven years later these adjectives had yielded to sly, treacherous, and deceitful. And no doubt the Chinese, considered once upon a time as thrifty, sober and law abiding, have also in recent days become the subject of some agonizing reappraisals.

Apart from the difficulty of identifying and consistently assessing national characters, it is generally recognized for humans, as for animals, that cross fertilization breeds its own hybrid vigour and that mongrel peoples are usually more creative than inbred groups. Few Americans, at least, would dare doubt this since 'the melting pot' is often their favourite catch phrase when discussing their own people. I was once in Detroit during a United Nations Week and to my surprise learned that the week's events had nothing to do with U.N.O., but were aimed solely at cementing the various racial and linguistic groups that had settled in the city. Nor should we British question the rewards of cross fertilization, since our proudest claim is the asylum we have always offered to the fugitive.

In thus doubting the influence of national character on design in this modern world, I do not belittle the differences between peoples caused by latitude, geography, geology and climate and witnessed by behaviour, conventions and social patterns. These obviously find their expressions in design since no culture has failed to provide its own æsthetic delights from the noseplugs of the earliest Egyptians to the lipsticks of to-day. To try to distinguish national character from national characteristics may seem to be splitting a hair, yet I believe it to be important in this shrinking world.

And it is only in the context of one world and one universal industrial system that we can usefully examine the strength of these local influences. To illustrate what I mean, I recall some few years ago asking the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R. to procure for me half a dozen photographs of modern Russian industrial design. After a long gap, six photographs turned up, three of passable imitations of American motorcars and three of wooden toys and ornaments such as are made, and have been made for hundreds of years, by Russian peasant craftsmen. Did those photographs prove the lasting influence of the Russian character or did they prove the universality of the machine age? At one time in

Russia an air ticket from Moscow to Odessa was said to cost the price of a pair of nylons. Was air travel then cheap or were nylons expensive? The two questions have something in common for neither is really answerable. But those Russian toys and Russian American-style motorcars do, I think, pose in the simplest terms a problem that is met with in all industrialized countries—namely the apparent conflict between folklore and technology in this age of scientific mass production.

In folklore I would include all those elements of handicraft habits and stylistic traditions which I believe most people, and particularly the English, associate with the idea of national character in design, and which that keen German student of England, Dr. Wilhelm Dibelius, certainly had in mind when he wrote of England that nowhere else have the forms of the past so tenacious a hold upon the present. He went on to say that the stylistic designs of English furniture, ceramics and book production are as typically English as the dreary gossip of an English drawing-room. He was, of course, writing 25 years ago when there was perhaps more time for gossip.

At that level of discussion, the level of popular acceptance of inherited manners, the argument for national influences on design is unanswerable. The evidence is all around us, entrenched in our own country most strongly perhaps in the Royal Academy, but also to be seen very clearly in High Wycombe, Stoke, Kidderminster, Lancashire or wherever our old craft-based industries are still active.

In Germany, heavy *Herren-Zimmer Renaissance* furniture, different in character from our own equivalent, is as yet by no means dead and still expresses in its sombre formality the whole weight of the Teutonic middle-class. A utility version of the same tradition was, I noticed, being offered to the inhabitants of Stalinallee last time I was in East Berlin.

Even in America, with its shorter history and its dynamic industry, national characteristics are clearly reflected in objects of popular art, such as the brazen juke-box, the glamorous automobile, the glittering cooker and the glossy magazine. The three Gs—Glamour, Glitter and Gloss—seem to spell the American equivalent of our own national weakness for muddle-age make-believe, and being immensely vigorous are easily exported, thereby confusing still further the *bourgeois* values of the old world.

The Americans moreover add considerable authority to their designs through their extensive systems of consumer research and performance tests, whether run by industry itself or by private consumer unions. I once saw, in the Montgomery Ward testing laboratory in Chicago, a harmless mattress being subjected to ten years of married life in ten days by a contraption of weights and rollers which forgot nothing, not even the injuries inflicted by men sitting on the edge of the bed to do up their shoes. It was difficult after that not to be convinced that one was looking at the finest mattress in the world.

Mountain peoples like the Swiss and the Austrians tend more than most to cling to old forms and handicrafts, and even in Scandinavia those who are not interested in their own times reproduce their particular national versions of

Bourbon and Napoleonic tastes. In a middle-class Dutch home you have only to see the heavy velour tablecloths to know at once where you are. In all those circles national character, if such it really is, is immediately recognizable, but my audience to-day is surely not concerned with such obvious manifestations. If we consider only uninstructed tastes we must find ourselves agreeing with the Americans who poke fun at the dark brown taste of the British, and also again with Dr. Dibelius, who said that the only things that the average Englishman understands in painting are portraits and anecdotes; and if we pay too much attention to ignorant consumer preferences, we may find ourselves listening to the opinions of the lady who thought a *Louis Seize* bed was two sizes larger than a *Louis Quatorze*, or even to the fabulous millionaire who ordered his architect to install an Elgin marble staircase.

The point of a talk on national character in design must be to examine the modern world of those creative designers who seek to liberate their contemporaries from preconceived notions. On this plane the task is more complex for there are several forces pulling in different directions. On the one hand, climate, customs and social systems tend to confirm national variations. On the other, function, technology and speed of communication tend to obliterate them. On which you put your money will largely depend on your own personal philosophy. The sentimental classes will cling to the former, thereby probably exaggerating the importance of parochial differences. The machine-minded will back the latter, to the probable exclusion of many enjoyable and interesting nuances, such as are evident in the various interpretations of modern architecture.

The position in that particular art has seldom been put better than by the Italian Ernesto Rogers in an essay on the 'Tradition of Modern Architecture in Italy', in two passages of which he explains both the differences and the similarities between modern architecture in Italy and elsewhere. On the differences he has this to say:

Italy is a country where spring, summer, autumn and winter find their full development and this may also be seen in architecture. We need neither very small windows nor enormous openings. Therefore one of the most evident characteristics of our architecture is a well-balanced equilibrium between full and empty surfaces. . . . Those huge windows, dear to German architects, are in our hot land limited in size and more knowingly distributed between the sunny and shaded sides of the building.

But on the basic similarities of international modern architecture he says this:

A certain cultural emphasis will, of course, be recognized from country to country and, indeed in different parts of a single country, but if we look very closely into reality we will once again admit that civilization is a large and beautiful circle from man to man in which everyone who takes his neighbour's hand receives strength from one side and gives strength to the other.

And that is surely the position in all the more personal industrial arts from architecture to pottery. Within the international circle of the modern movement and the functional approach to design, there is in these fields plenty of room for reasonable expression of temperament.

Domestic pottery offers many examples—the English teapot is likely to be a modification of an already proven shape rather than a radical innovation; the Germans will reach a similar result by rather different means—they are more likely to approach the problem as an intellectual exercise in fitting shape to purpose; the Italians will experiment with sculptural forms for the pleasure and fun of it; and the Americans may achieve a similar end because their restless market has got tired of familiar shapes and wants something new at all costs.



FIGURE 1. *Teapots from four countries: top left from Britain; bottom left from Italy; top right from Germany and bottom right from the United States*

Cutlery and flatware afford the same comparisons—the Italian experimental to the point of eccentricity; the Danish also original but more controlled; the German straightforward, eminently functional and perhaps a bit heavy; the English elegant in a traditional eighteenth-century manner yet not in this case copying the past.

I believe Confucius might have appreciated these four examples for it seems he was once asked how he would recognize a good artist-craftsman—or let us say to-day a good designer—and he replied: 'First by the reputation of his ancestors for honesty and sincerity; second by his ability to create something new with a tradition that is old'. To me at least those four examples are neither rootless nor replicas, but proclaim both country and date of origin, at the same time owing much to the common spirit of their age.

Now for a glass quartette—ornamental objects this time rather than useful

ones (see Figure 3). The Finnish are the most original in conception and photography, both being the work of that outstanding individual Tapio Wirkkala, but, were he not the author, one would still expect something unusual from Finland, a mysterious country peopled by gifted artists. The Swedish seems also clearly Nordic with its strange elongated, auroral shapes. The German is similarly influenced, but with use intruding on fancy, while the English again regards its classical tradition and is probably in this case the poorer for it.

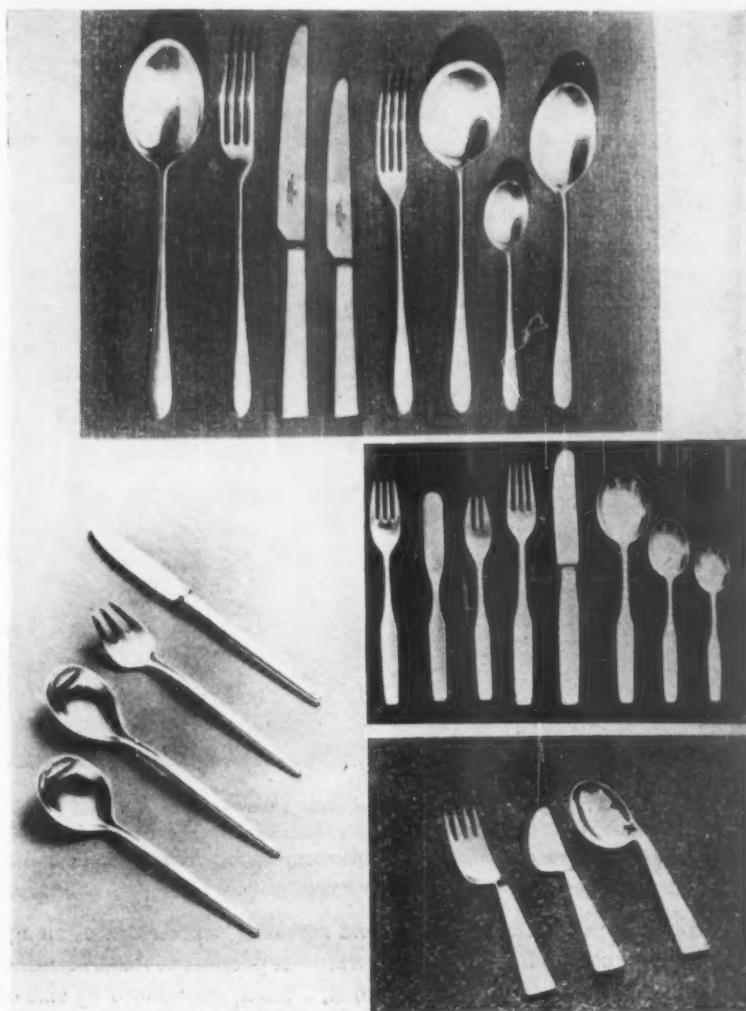


FIGURE 2. *Four groups of modern flat-ware: top from Britain; bottom left from Denmark; centre right from Germany and bottom right from Italy*

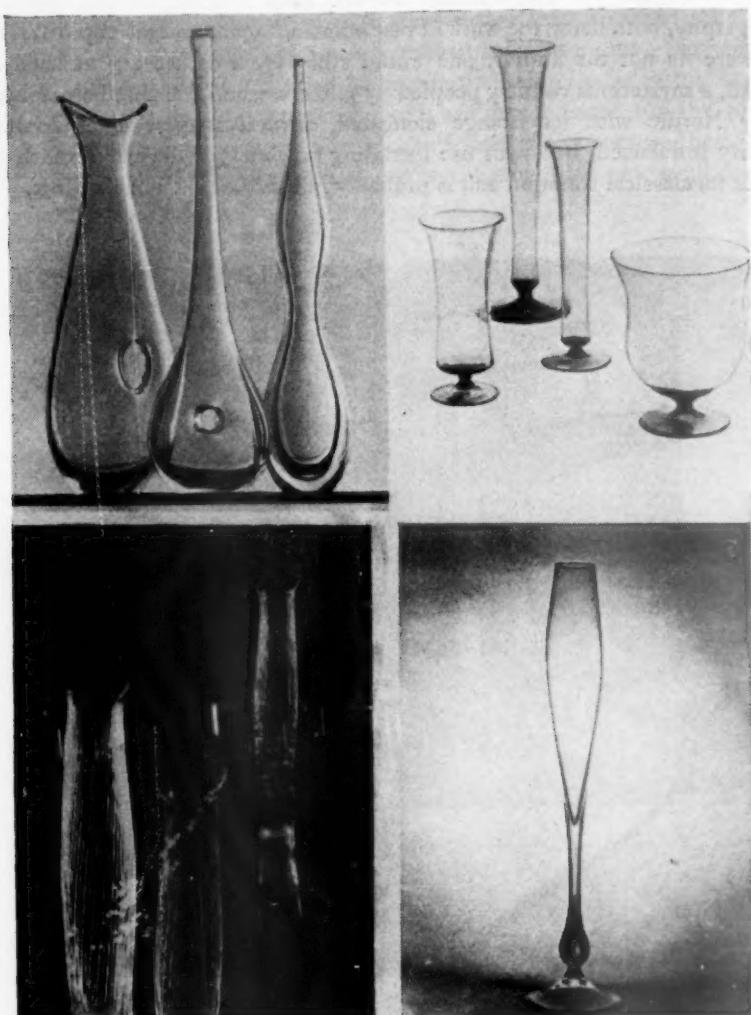


FIGURE 3. *Elongated ornamental glass showing some national characteristics: top left from Sweden; bottom left from Finland; top right from Germany and bottom right from Britain*

Chairs are perhaps the most personal and revealing expressions of an age and of a people. I have chosen four as nearly of a kind as possible to make identification the more difficult, but even so the German is, I think, announced by size of seat and strength of leg; the Italian by slender, sophisticated contrast of black against white; the Danish by hand caressed, fluid woodiness and the English by what? By modesty, anonymity and conformity perhaps—which brings me to a point about ourselves.



FIGURE 4. *Four chairs of similar character but revealing national interpretations: top left from Germany; bottom left from Denmark; top right from Italy and bottom right from Britain*

We British are in a special position in the world, geographically, politically and socially. We lie half way between those two great cultural basins, the Baltic and the Mediterranean. In our history we have felt the pull of each as in some recurring tug of war; we have felt the recurring conflict that is as old as history itself between the severe, the scientific, the rigid on the one hand, and the loose, the romantic and the high flying on the other; we have had our Christopher Wrens who find more beauty in straight lines than in curves, and our Hogarths whose lines of beauty are double-curved. We receive ideas from all quarters and in the long run manage to digest them, but this takes time.

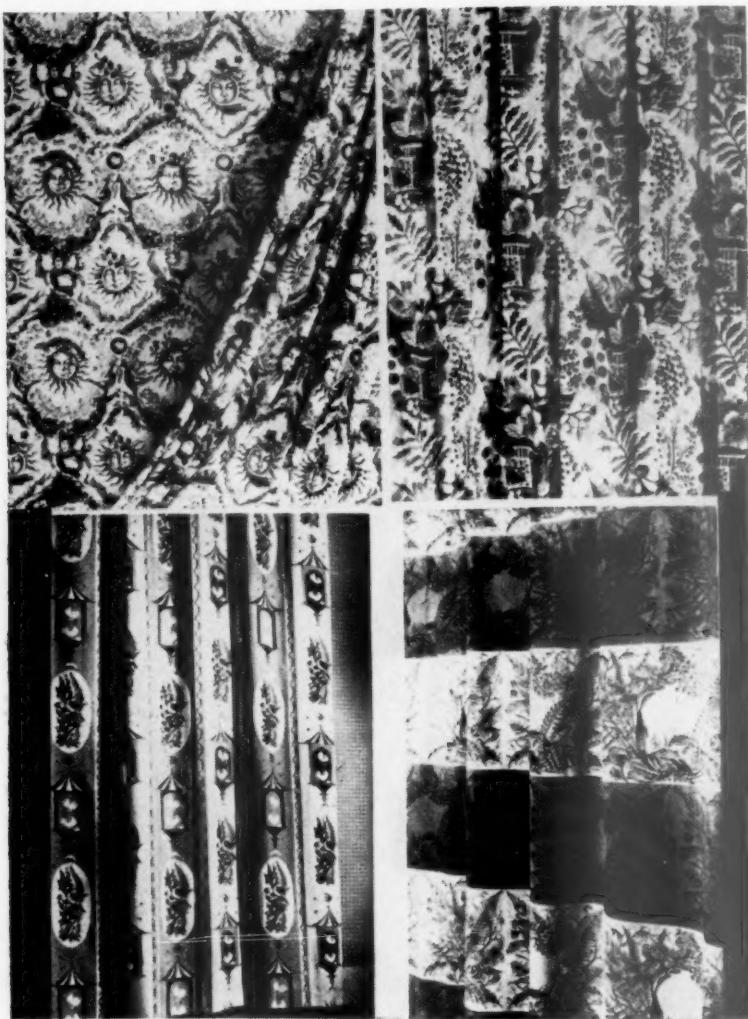


FIGURE 5. *Four textiles carrying on the British floral tradition*

In these middle years of the century we are again in receptive mood and it would be a brave man who would forecast the outcome—whether our Baltic selves will remain in the ascendant or whether the Italians may once more speak to the sunnier side of our natures. And to-day, too, there is a third and very dominant influence from across the Atlantic to be reckoned with.

We have not yet, as far as I can see, produced a designer of such stature that he will in Wordsworth's assessment of a great poet 'create the taste by which he is appreciated'. We still have to look at our designers rather in the way that the late Paul Léautaud regarded Anatole France: 'One reads Anatole France', he said, 'simply to find out what Anatole France has been reading'—which is not

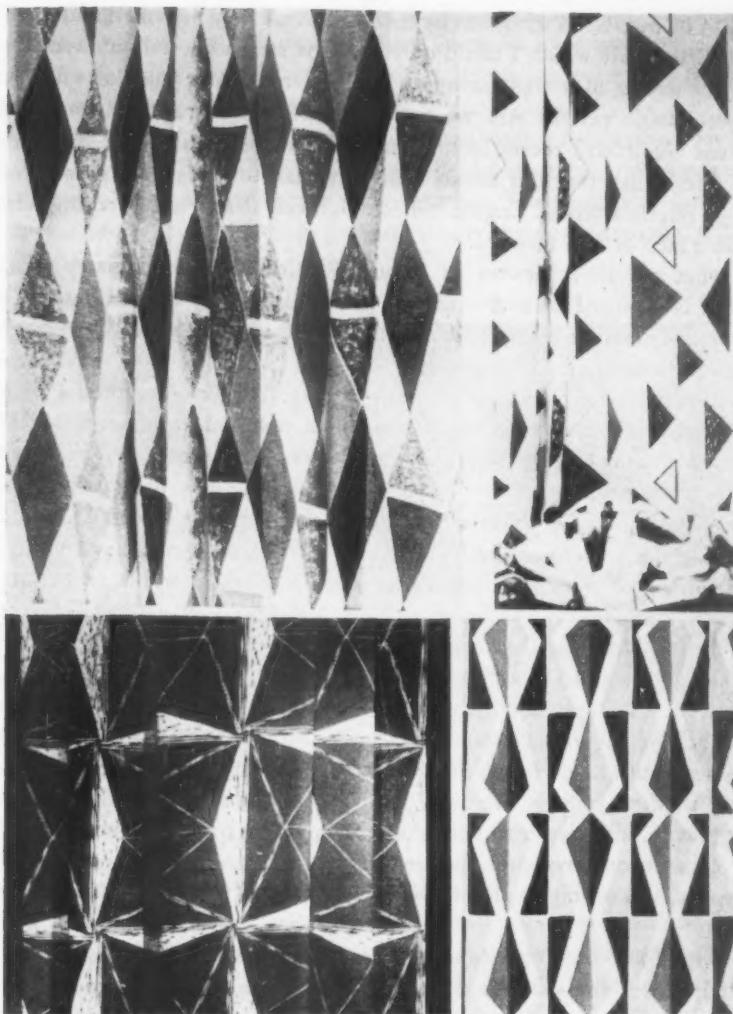


FIGURE 6. *Four equally British textile designs of the abstract, geometric school*

to decry our many talented industrial artists but really to congratulate them on keeping their eyes open.

We are, too, a moderate and democratic people—we digest our revolutions as quickly as possible and then forget about them, so that the non-conformist of one generation becomes the pattern for the next. The very word has changed its meaning. When I served before the war on a liberal newspaper we had always to keep our eyes skinned lest, by embracing unorthodox views, we offended not the conformist but the non-conformist conscience of our readers. So it will be with design. What to-day seems advanced, will to-morrow be defended as traditional

and not to be interfered with, but by then the forms may be tamed and anglicized like that little chair which I could only describe as modest and anonymous.

I may be wrong, of course, for we are also, as Dr. Pevsner must have discovered, an unpredictable people. Are we not a race of gardeners? Was not Professor Wyndham Goodden's recent lecture entitled, 'A Rose is a Rose'? And would it not be safe to say that our textile designers lean towards nature as shown by Figure 5? Surely a typical English collection, nicely drawn and carrying our floral tradition a step or two forward.

But what are those shown in Figure 6? Continental geometry? Bauhaus abstracts? Nothing of the sort—they are as English as they are made which shows both the unwisdom of taking national character for granted and the versatility of our present generation of designers.

But I must take my argument a stage further. We have accepted I hope that in the more personal, craft-based industries national expressions within an international idiom can and will make themselves felt, in some countries positively in others more negatively. You would accept, too, I hope, the rôle of society in this pattern, for social structures have a powerful influence on design. One of the reasons for the current similarity between British and Scandinavian furniture, apart from a common ancestry stemming *via* the Cotswolds from our own eighteenth century, is the similarity of our social structures—we are all democratic, middle-class, semi-socialist, welfare states. Modern design in all these countries started as a middle-class, professional and artisan manifestation, and from there has spread downwards and more slowly upwards.

In Italy it seems to have started at the top in a thin rich crust, where fantasy could be well afforded; hence the daring, the extravagance and the attraction of so many modern Italian designs. I sense something similar in America which, although as middle-class and democratic as any, is yet a money-activated society where conspicuous expenditure has become a conventional necessity. Hence that expensive, exciting, highly fashionable quality of the best modern American work.

You would also accept, I hope, that taste does not stand still. Only the blind could fail to see the changes that have taken place in our lifetime within the modern movement—a mellowing perhaps, or a humanizing—certainly a relaxing of the rigid canons of functional simplicity. The two chairs in Figure 7 show the trend clearly, both metallic chairs produced in engineering workshops, both using modern materials but separated by a generation. It might be tempting perhaps to say of the left-hand one that it is essentially German in its bald and economical statement, and of the right-hand one that it is obviously English with its friendly, almost cosy, familiarity. But though the original of the tubular chair was designed in Germany, both of these were, I believe, made in England. To me they express an international mellowing of taste, rather than national differences.

In the world of print and typography the same trends are apparent. In Figure 8 we have two examples of the work of a continental typographer now living over here. The first was done soon after his arrival, the second ten years later.

Are we to judge from this that he became anglicized in those ten years, or would it be more correct to say that typographical manners have undergone the same revision—in this case from blunt geometrical layout and sans serif letter forms to something more graceful and classical?

If we take the national standpoint we must next explain the two G.P.O. symbols in Figure 8, both a hundred per cent British in origin, but revealing to my mind the same trend towards grace and relaxation. The parallel with the tubular chair seems pretty close. It would be hard to say where international trends end and national influences begin.

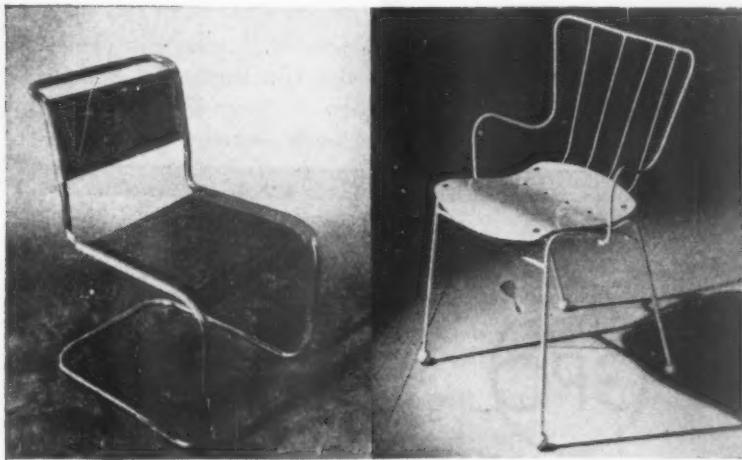


FIGURE 7. *Two metal, factory-made chairs suggesting a change in taste over a generation from pure functionalism to something less severe and rectilinear*

So far I have been speaking mainly of domestic designs that are susceptible to personal or national expression. To bridge the gap between these and the world of technology and heavy industry, I might cite four chairs from four different countries, which would defy identification on grounds of national character influencing design. They owe their origin to one man's genius, but there is another reason for their similarity and their anonymity. Although they are chairs and should therefore on my reasoning be likely to reflect national characteristics, they are all products of present-day international technology. They do not stem from the woodworking shop but from the blacksmith or the engineer, and in three cases from the new highly technical industries of plastics and glass. The seats are of moulded glass fibres impregnated with quick-curing polyester resins; the frames of course are of welded steel.

These discoveries and techniques are now international. Should we in this field spend time searching for national expressions or should we rather devote our energies to perfecting the product and its production? To take an extreme case, should our electrical engineers endeavour to give an essentially British

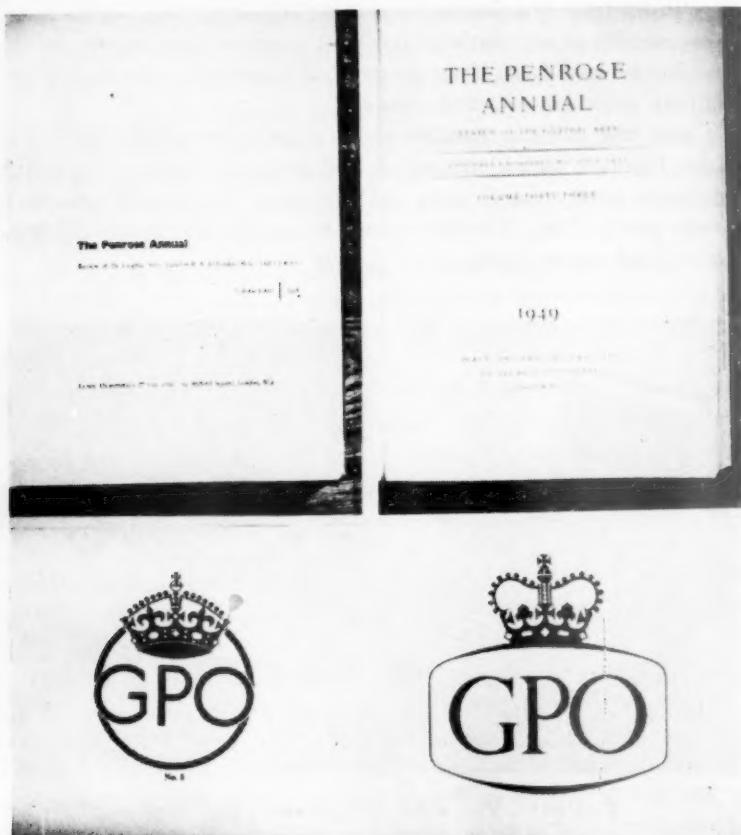


FIGURE 8. *Two typographical examples illustrating the same change in taste that has occurred in recent years, from a stern modernism to something more relaxed and graceful*

appearance to their turbo-generators or should they concentrate on maximum efficiency, ease of maintenance and other technical requirements, none of which, mark you, should exclude the services of an industrial designer?

The answer would seem obvious, but it presents the sentimentalist with an uncomfortable issue, unless he falls back on the perfectly tenable proposition that by keeping both eyes firmly on the ball an industrial designer will nevertheless produce something which expresses national temperament—as Olivetti's designer has with his sculptural and recognizably Italian typewriters. If that is the argument I have no quarrel with it, but I doubt whether the protagonists of a national expression are often as far-sighted or as willing to leave the issue to chance or to nature. I believe too that in most engineering products function and the means of production must dictate form and that a national character will be only incidental or even accidental. To strain after national expression is likely in these fields to injure the result.

But I once heard one of our own leading designers, whose opinion I respect, maintain that even so functional an object as a military tank would reveal its country of origin, particularly in wartime when the barriers are up and each country is developing its arms in secret. I got hold of four pictures of last war tanks, three allied and one enemy, and I must confess that I was stumped.

In aircraft rather different considerations apply, though I doubt whether aeronautical engineers stop to think much about national character. But in peacetime, as in war, aircraft wear uniform or livery, and it is there that they give themselves away. The hucksters voice speaks with many accents. It is generally true that the good is best left alone and that British understatement in aircraft livery can build good public relations.

I have one further point. It is not so much to do with national character as with national methods or national ways of dealing with design problems. This, of course, introduces the client, the most influential link in the whole chain, for on the thought that he gives to these questions depends the standard of design to be achieved.

I take stamps as an example since public authority seems blithely immune to criticism. Figure 9 shows seven stamps produced in seven countries but under very different auspices. First, that of Montserrat, a British colony. It suggests an origin in some amateur scribble by a local postmaster or perhaps in a local competition among British residents, for such seems to be the usual starting point in the design and production of our colonial stamps. The results are painfully familiar to stamp collectors.

The French one is more interesting but equally French for I have it on good authority that these stamps depicting local and regional views are a political perquisite of a new postmaster-general, whose first action will be to flatter his constituents by putting their home town on a stamp. But notice, however, that a competent artist has been employed to render the design.

The United States stamp speaks equally of political ambition, for it results from the lobbying activities of a pressure group, in this case the newspaper boys. But how different the treatment from the similar French essay. Surely no designer can have had a hand in this banal assembly of text and motifs.

Next Austria, as conscious as ever of its *baroque* imperial past, but cleverly associating its first postage stamp with the centenary of the service. In this case the stamp was commissioned, designed and printed within the Austrian civil service.

Then Germany—a stamp produced during the allied occupation, but nevertheless Teutonic to the core, blunt, efficient, symbolic (no matter of what for the moment) and boldly claiming its price.

Next the Netherlands, a product of an intelligent committee working with a fine, classical printer to produce a good stamp by any standards, even if it is rather reminiscent of our own Victorian penny black.

Last Switzerland, and to me the most interesting of the lot, for here an artist has been employed to render a topographical scene in stylized terms suited to a stamp; it is not a poster, like the French one, nor a tear-sheet from a schoolroom

atlas like the British colonial one, but a conscious attempt at stamp design that says Switzerland first and last.

The next five stamps (if all are visible) are rather different in character. These are propaganda or salesmen's stamps but they reveal something of the countries concerned. The top two are Russian—the portrait-shaped one employing orthodox Stalinist heraldry—brash, corny stuff and not much better than its neighbour which depicts an agricultural pavilion at a national exhibition—obviously a reduction from a full coloured, realistic oil painting so popular with the social realists.

The French one is self-explanatory, though to me not worthy of France—an attempt to sell high fashion through low denomination postage stamps. But note that every French stamp is signed by the artist—an indication of the importance attached in France to this minor but universally witnessed art.

Next East Germany—Socialist realism of the purest vintage but surely not a stamp design with so many worthies crowded into so small a space.



FIGURE 9. Seven stamps each telling something of national attitudes to stamp design



FIGURE 10. *Five stamps with a propaganda purpose: top Russian; below French, East German and United States*

And lastly the current American Liberty stamp, a definitive issue by the present Government. It is I think the best of these propaganda stamps.

What lessons should we draw from these illustrations, other than the obvious one that design is no better than the client who commissions it. And that is perhaps not a bad note to end on, for the responsibility for standards of design rests not with the designer, nor with the public, but ultimately with the patron or those who are in authority. If the client does not know his art from his elbow there can be little profit in discussing the influence of national character on design.

DISCUSSION

MR. NOEL WHITE: The lecturer has mentioned climate as one of the ingredients of national character in design, but I wonder if he would go one further and include geology, which seems to me distinctly important in this particular context. I refer to the pure white body used by the potters at Stoke-on-Trent. Mr. Reilly also mentioned glass. I think that probably the body of the lead crystal which we use has a very

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definite influence on the type of design produced in glassware in this country, and probably the variegated colour of our bricks has had a direct influence on our architecture. Even in Italy, and in modern architecture there, I think one can detect the influence and appreciation of stone in the types of design which have been adopted, even in the most modern idiom.

THE LECTURER: I certainly agree with that. I imagine that I must have omitted to mention geology, although I am sure I intended to do so.

I thought that Robert Jordan, reviewing Dr. Pevsner's book in *The Observer*, made a very good point that one could really talk more in terms of geological belts as unifying design—not taste exactly, but attitudes to design—rather than national character. He was talking about the marble belt. There is probably more unity of thought of approach in design where similar materials are easily available, than other more vertical differences. I entirely accept that geology is important in establishing certain differences, but I would not go so far as to say that it influences national character as we have it to-day.

MR. C. HAMILTON ELLIS: Transport is my province, and I might say something about the oldest form of transport—the ship. National character is shown in such matters as the projecting stern gallery on Dutch and French ships in the seventeenth century, and the recessed gallery on English ships, which with due English modesty receded altogether and gave place to a line of windows in Nelson's time. Then there is motor transport, and the fact that the motor coach made its impact on this country in the middle 1920s as the poor man's limousine. But whereas a German or Argentine motor coach is often a very admirable vehicle indeed, the modern British motor coach, alas, (I am a citizen of Brighton, which has a *Concours d'Elegance* of such vehicles) seldom exemplifies good design. My own love is the locomotive, but the period from 1860 to 1965 will apparently be the life span of steam locomotion, apart from ships and power stations. Stephenson produced the classic locomotive we know in this country, and a character named Edward Bury, a member of the Royal Society, produced a sort of nonconformist locomotive which he exported to America. There was one other great classic originator of the locomotive, Marc Seguin, and I suggest that Trevithick, Seguin and Stephenson produced the allegedly moribund steam locomotive, which all the rest of the world has copied. America followed our nonconformist Bury and his type of bar-framed engine still provides about a third of the locomotive power on American railways. The Russians took up a mixture of American and German, because Eastwick and Harrison, two Americans, set up the business in Russia in the 1840s; and so I would like very humbly to put on record that the British success men, Mr. Stephenson and his son and the British nonconformist who was sacked by the London and Birmingham Railways in the 1840s, between them produced the steam locomotive which we have seen and which perhaps, alas, we shall see out.

Am I right in believing that the steam locomotive is perhaps the one tremendous contribution we have made to industrial design in the past 500 years?

THE LECTURER: Obviously you know very much more about locomotives than I do. I would agree that it was an enormous contribution, particularly when steam locomotives and railway transport had captured public imagination, but only then. The moment the other forms of transport rivalled it, and interest shifted away from the railways, then I think you will find that you will have noticed a decline in the standards of industrial design, not only in locomotives but in everything to do with rail transport. The Southern Railway showed a certain revival of design standards, I always think, between the two wars in the 1930s, when the Southern Railway was electrified. It was a new form of traction which somehow upgraded the standard

of architecture and other things to do with the Southern Railway. It may be that the new Diesel traction will have a similar salutary effect on the design standards of our railways—I hope so.

MR. C. HAMILTON ELLIS: In certain countries where people are compelled to use one or another form of transport I suggest that the standards of industrial design on the railways are very alive indeed. For example in several advanced countries there is a train or a bus, but not both, on any one route. Our trouble here with the industrial design of railways is not that the railways are so obsolescent that there will not be any by the time we are dead, but the fact that we are thoroughly pampered people who can pick and choose. Does not that convey a suggestion that industrial design becomes rather moribund when people are so certain about this, that, or the other, that they just do not care?

MR. E. LIONEL PHIPPS: I would like to ask the lecturer's advice to a clock-case designer who is one of the contemporary protagonists of modern architecture and house building. I refer to the trend for having one fireplace in the house, with one mantelpiece and that a narrow one. How can a designer put 'national characteristics' into clock case design upon a 3½-inch or 4-inch mantelpiece, there being only one in the house?

THE LECTURER: I think you should be addressing that question to the slabbers—the manufacturers of tiled fireplaces who make those narrow ledges. I agree that it is an awful problem. I think the narrow ledges of tiled fire surrounds that go into most speculative housing has done something to produce these strange shapes in modern clocks with long thin bases. At our Design Centre we have chosen, in general, fire surrounds that are a bit wider than the ones you are talking about, so you may, if we are successful with our influence on the slabbers and the fire surround manufacturers, have a broader base upon which to work.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am not sure that I cannot contribute something to your problem there. I do not pretend to be an industrial designer; but it struck me some years ago that there was a great waste of watches going on in this country. We inherited the large watches of our fathers, whereas we harnessed ourselves with small wrist-watches of the present generation. So I got a miniature grandfather clock made, about ten inches in height, after the model of a full-sized clock in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It now beautifully holds my father's watch and can go on the narrowest mantelpiece in the country.

MR. L. J. GRIFFIN: The use of a clock is to tell the time and not necessarily to perch on a mantelpiece.

THE CHAIRMAN: The point of my watch-clock is that it will both tell the time and go on a mantelpiece or anywhere else.

Have we no philatelists in this audience? I once had to commission a stamp for the Post Office, and was rather horrified by some proposed designs. I enlisted a Royal Designer for Industry, and got a better job done. The lecturer showed us no English stamps, only foreign and Colonial issues. Surely someone will stand up for the stamps.

THE LECTURER: I think I ought to make it clear that our General Post Office takes this problem much more seriously than it appears that the Colonial Office does. They have, every time a new issue of G.P.O. stamps for Britain is necessary, consulted the Council of Industrial Design on the designer to be approached, and we were in fact invited by the G.P.O. to set up a Committee to advise the Postmaster-General

once the designs were submitted and to make the selection therefrom. The colonial stamp authorities should take a leaf out of the G.P.O.'s book.

MR. EDGAR LEWY: As regards the Colonial question, it does tend, as far as stamps are concerned, to raise rather large political issues. The colonies are, in this respect, sovereign, and the Colonial Office can act merely in a consultative and advisory capacity. Consequently the people who actually do the design are mostly staff artists employed by the stamp printers. With three or four firms engaged on the job, they have to follow sometimes 'out of the window'. They have to use what the colony provides, and by artistic improvements they are able, with the help of encyclopædias and botanical references and so forth, to create something at any rate moderately acceptable. I do not think one really ought to condemn them out of hand, because of the very considerable difficulties which are raised, by attempts to improve design, in the face of local pride.

MISS ANTOINETTE BOISSEVAIN: I am Dutch, but I have been living in England for years and designing here, and I never know to which nationality I belong. In France I feel a foreigner; in England I feel a foreigner, especially as I am in touch with design, because one does not feel so much the nationality of each design. The design is the important thing, not so much whether the designer is English, German or Dutch. I hope very much that the internationality of design is going to be supported in future for all designers, so that each design in every country can be exported. The young people all over Europe may be wanting what the young designers are now going to make for us. They are the ones who have to be catered for. It is for their sense of beauty and for their happiness that things are now being made.

MR. E. LIONEL PHIPPS: There is a definite trend to-day towards wall clocks, because of the modern developments in house building.

Here we are noticeably poor in tradition, because there is no traditional English wall clock; and I am interested to see the efforts being made—most of them I think really feeble copies of continental designs—to meet present needs. In America there are points from an electric circuit wherever a clock could possibly be wanted, but in this country there is no such forethought. Here is a very big problem for the manufacturers of electrically-driven synchronous clocks, to get the public to have clock points wired for wall clocks. This is inevitable if the trend is followed from now onwards of having only one or two mantelpieces in a house.

THE LECTURER: I think you have put your finger on a real problem. When we came to choose clocks for the Design Centre, the field was rather narrow. Very few could we find of the mantel-shelf variety, but we found in the wall clocks that we could get plenty of office or factory utilitarian clocks, but nothing really suitable for domestic use, other than a rather exhibitiony sunburst which is in the Design Centre at the moment. So there is this big gap to be filled—between on the one hand the fairly utilitarian, and on the other the over-fanciful. I think it would be something which we would welcome, and indeed often consider, in the Council of Industrial Design, in view of the fact that there are so few good clocks of a modern kind being made to-day, that we could have an international exhibition of foreign clocks in the modern idiom. I asked our opposite numbers in Sweden, Switzerland and Germany whether they had the same problem, and they said exactly the same; less so, of course, in Switzerland, but in Sweden and Germany it is equally difficult to find good modern clocks suited to a good modern interior.

MRS. C. G. TOMRLEY: Possibly the influence of the national characteristics of any nation must vary from time to time in the strength they exert on design. Social influences of many kinds must at this moment, I feel, be tending towards new development in this country at some point in the design field. Where that growing point

26TH OCTOBER 1956

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CHARACTER ON DESIGN

is is very difficult to say, because we cannot spot it. Where it is, there, I feel, will the national characteristics emerge most strongly.

MR. C. H. URQUHART: I believe that it is true that very little of the furniture which has been produced in this country is English in origin, but generally the furniture has been imported from the Continent and undergone an anglicizing process—sometimes quite a rapid process. Could the lecturer comment on whether the result is an improvement on the original or is the anglicizing a degenerative process?

THE LECTURER: If I am right in thinking that modesty is one of our attributes in design, it is really up to each individual one of us to decide whether a modification on that direction is an improvement on the original. I have a feeling that the best of the contemporary furniture which we see in the shops to-day owes as much really to our own eighteenth-century antecedents, and to the work of our own pioneers like Gimson and Voysey and Sir Gordon Russell, as it does to any foreign influence, particularly in the wooden cabinet furniture. We have often argued this with our friends in Sweden. They have said that we have copied them, and I am always eager to put it round the other way. I think the Danes would probably be the first to recognize that they owe more to us than we do to them, because Professor Kaara Klint used to bring his students over to the Victoria and Albert Museum to study the modest country-built English furniture of the late eighteenth century, and on that he built his own school of furniture design.

MR. URQUHART: But then probably the modest English country built furniture of the eighteenth century is the only native furniture which is entirely English in origin.

THE LECTURER: Very probably.

MR. HARRY TRETHOWAN: As regards national characteristics, I wonder very much how many people in this country would appreciate what our lecturer has told us this afternoon, or have really captured anything of contemporary developments in design.

I have been interested in furniture since the days of oil-lamps and antimacassars and have also seen the phase of metal furniture, the introduction of which was prompted by a timber shortage, and the end of its popularity. But whereas fashion is transitory, traditional values of good design are generally to be found at work somewhere, and in that Scandinavia pays tribute to this country.

A vote of thanks to the Lecturer was carried with acclamation, and the meeting then ended.

THE THEATRE AND BALLET IN CANADA

The Neil Matheson McWharrie Lecture by

ROBERT SPEAIGHT, M.A., F.R.S.L.,

*delivered to the Commonwealth Section of the Society on
Tuesday, 29th May, 1956, with His Excellency Mr.
Norman A. Robertson, High Commissioner for Canada,
in the Chair*

THE CHAIRMAN: We are met this afternoon for the regular rendering of the Neil Matheson McWharrie Lecture and it is the privilege of the Royal Society of Arts to have this year, as the lecturer, Mr. Robert Speaight, who is going to talk to us about the theatre and ballet in Canada. I am, myself, looking forward to learning from Mr. Speaight so I shall not, as chairman, make any impudent effort to anticipate what he is going to say. I would like, however, in anticipation to say a word about the value we, in Canada, have drawn from the work of the Dominion Drama Festival, which will always be associated in the memory of Canadians with the days when Lord Bessborough was Governor-General of Canada.

It is 25 years since the Drama Festival was founded, largely at his inspiration, and those were quite discouraging days of drought and economic depression. Things did not come quite so easily as they seem to have been coming in the years since the war, and his interest and initiative in helping to bring together and encourage people all over the country who were anxious to foster Canadian interest in drama, have had a long-continuing history. Mr. Speaight who, I think, knows Canada perhaps best from the year he was out as an adjudicator in the final competitions in the Dominion Drama Festival, can speak about the part that this organization has come to play in this aspect of the life of Canada.

The following lecture was then delivered:

THE LECTURE

The pride and pleasure with which I accepted the invitation to give this lecture cannot quite conceal the fact that I am at a disadvantage, and I had better begin by admitting it. It is six years since I saw anything of the Canadian theatre, and I have seen nothing at all of the Canadian ballet. What is not told at first hand is hardly worth the telling, and I should not wish to insult my patient audience by giving them something they could get just as well, or better, from a publicity hand-out. The Canadian theatre, when I knew it, had certainly recovered from its birth-pangs. It showed many signs of vigorous life and it suffered from the normal epidemics. But I do not think the doctors were uniformly optimistic. There were doldrums, head-shakings, hectic consultations, crises and near despairs. But then, as you probably know, the theatre is a perpetual invalid, chronically ill, and incurably immortal. Let any Canadian who despairs of his theatre look up the cartoon in which the beloved Max depicted Harley Granville-Barker prescribing a strong dose of municipal pills for the ailing.

the almost-expiring body of the British stage. There are only two things you can safely predict about any theatre; that it will disobey the doctors, and that it will survive.

Nevertheless the Canadian theatre, as I first met it in 1948, was faced with the problems, as well as the opportunities, which are inherent in the Canadian situation: an immensely extended and sparsely inhabited country, combining but not integrating the two master-cultures of the Western world; deriving its vigour from its interior tensions; alternately resisting and surrendering to the neighbour who cannot help seducing it from the south. Scarcely had I landed from my aeroplane in Ottawa and driven to the hospitable gates of the High Commissioner than I was told the saying imputed to Mr. Mackenzie King, who was then Prime Minister of the Dominion and whom I later met. 'Canada', he was reported to have said, 'is like a huge sheep-pen, and the first job of a Canadian Prime Minister is to stop the sheep getting out of it'. Now I have never noticed any resemblance between Canadians and sheep—not even black sheep—but experience taught me that there was a grain of truth in the simile. There was always a certain amount of unofficial drama about the Drama Festival, and when I declined to recommend a company from Regina as a competitor in the final competition, the fury of Saskatchewan almost reached the limits of secession. There were always a certain number of sheep trying to escape from the festival; and sometimes they were *pré-salé* sheep from the banks of the St. Lawrence which promised the most succulent saddles.

My purpose in visiting Canada was to act as adjudicator for the Drama Festival and the moment is now sadly ripe to pay a tribute to Lord Bessborough who had founded it. Lord Bessborough was himself a gifted amateur actor, but the Dominion Drama Festival was much more than an amateur diversion. It was an act of far-sighted statesmanship, and more profoundly than anything else, perhaps, it marked Lord Bessborough's term of office as Governor-General. He knew that nothing brings people together like acting. It was already bringing Canadians together in their isolated groups throughout the continent: a protest, swelling every year in volume, against the virtual disappearance of a professional theatre from the Dominion: a challenge to the cinema and the radio; not so much a denial that these new forms of entertainment could be valuable, as an assertion that the live theatre, however humble and however crude, was an irreplaceable element in the life of a civilized community. If one got these groups to meet one another (so reasoned Lord Bessborough) surely their standards would be improved and their confidence encouraged. Surely an annual competition in drama would help Canada to know itself. And so the cultural and political ideas became interfused.

How badly this knowledge was needed was borne in upon me two years later when I spent four of the happiest months of my career working with *Les Compagnons* in Montreal. I shall have more to say about *Les Compagnons* in a moment. All I want to recall for you now is the experience of living as the grateful guest of the University Club, close by McGill, and taking my bus every morning to the French-speaking quarters of the city. I was never quite sure

at what precise spot one crossed the channel, but that one did cross it in a space of about 15 minutes I had no doubt whatever. When I alighted at the charming new theatre of *Les Compagnons*, I almost believed myself in Paris. Here was the atmosphere and the enthusiasm of the *avant-garde*; firmly defined aesthetic principles; Molière and Claudel. But the good people I had left behind me at the University Club, and whom I should probably rejoin for luncheon, had no more notion of what was going on in the *Théâtre des Compagnons* than the members of the Atheneum have of what is going on at the Athénée.

Whether Lord Bessborough foresaw the developments of 25 years in Canadian theatre I do not know, but I think it very unlikely that if he had not founded the Dominion Drama Festival in 1932 there would be a Canadian company acting *Henry V* at Edinburgh in 1956. The Festival of 1948 certainly opened my eyes not only to the possibilities of the Canadian theatre but to the possibilities of Canada. Just as Canada was coming to an exciting consciousness of itself—a consciousness that literally made the air electric—so the Canadian theatre was beginning to grow up. Standards were already high. There was a performance of *St. Joan* by a girl from London, Ontario, which no one who saw it will ever forget. Here was the big-boned peasant that Jeanne d'Arc must have been and as Shaw had certainly imagined her: large and a little gauche; speaking in a deep contralto and with a Canadian burr which served the part infinitely better than any accent she could have inherited or acquired in England. The things which fitted Olga Landiak to play St. Joan may have unfitted her to play much else, but her acting had an unspoiled integrity which you could rarely have found on a more sophisticated stage. Then there was a performance of Anouilh's *Antigone* by *Les Compagnons* which had a smoothness and texture, a certainty of tone and rhythm, an infallible taste, which you only get from a company inspired by a passionate ideal and accustomed to think of itself as members one of another. This production was indeed a triumph of single-mindedness; and the same thing could be said of Madame Boutil's *Cercle Molière* from Winnipeg.

I must delay a little over *Les Compagnons* because they illustrated the dilemma which the amateur movement in Canada was rapidly approaching. The father and founder of the troupe was Père Emile Legault, who had been inspired by the doctrines of Jacques Copeau—perhaps the most luminous intelligence which has served the theatre in our time. Legault was in full reaction against the vulgar trivialities of the contemporary stage. He was searching for a simplicity, an asceticism, which the theatre had largely lost; and for actors who would come to it with a sense of almost religious dedication. He was re-discovering the theatre as a way of life as well as a way of art. At first the company gave their performances in a disused church; they travelled pretty well all over the Province of Quebec; went up to Ottawa and down into New Brunswick; and they played anonymously. Naturally they drew their inspiration from Paris. Henri Ghéon came out and worked with them, and Ludmilla Pitoeff lent them the prestige of her exquisite talent in Claudel's *Echange*. But, of course, all this was too good to last—and for an obvious reason. As these amateur actors became proficient

and even expert in their craft, they wanted to devote their whole time to it, and Père Legault was faced with the intractable problem of giving professional actors a livelihood. When I returned to Canada in 1949 to judge the Regional Dramatic Festivals right through the Dominion some members of the company had already gone to Paris to acquire further experience. Others had to spend a good part of their time acting for the radio. The bonds of an ideal community were becoming relaxed, and I think the productions were suffering in consequence.

It was at this point that Père Legault asked me to come out the following year to Montreal and produce Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* in the French translation by Henri Fluchère, playing the part that I had myself created in 1935. By this time I had played Becket nearly a thousand times, and I needed the stimulus of playing it in French if I was going on playing it at all. So I eagerly accepted the invitation. Les Compagnons were no longer quite the ensemble that I had admired in Ottawa in 1948, but they had gathered some good new recruits and they gave an excellent performance of the play. I cannot say that the production had a great popular success in Montreal; it was far better appreciated in Quebec. The French-speaking audiences in the larger city were not, taken as a whole, educated up to the ideas of Père Legault, and they were certainly not up to the new kind of drama, at once religious and revolutionary, which was represented by *Murder in the Cathedral*. They were hungering for Molière, and that, after all is a very respectable appetite; or, if not Molière, then for the good old comedies of the Boulevards. After we had played *Murder in the Cathedral*, I stayed on to produce Pierre-Jean Jouve's translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In this Jean Coutu and Hélène Loiselle gave us as good performances of the two chief parts as I have ever seen, and a brilliant comedian from Paris, Guy Hoffmann, gave a splendid account of old Capulet. But already it was clear that Les Compagnons were fighting a losing battle. They needed a much larger subsidy and a much tighter administration, if they were to balance their budget, pay for their theatre, and maintain their standards. Shortly afterwards the heroic enterprise folded up; it had shone like a good deed in a naughty world.

While I was working with Les Compagnons Père Legault often talked to me about one of his best actors, Jean Gascon, who had gone to France and was then acting with the Centre Dramatique de l'Ouest. And in fact it is Jean Gascon and Guy Hoffmann who are now at the head of the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde in Montreal. I am eager to see the work of this company, for it is clear that they have been largely inspired by the traditions of Les Compagnons and are carrying on their work in a way better suited to the demands of a full-time professional theatre. I read with interest that some members of the company will be appearing at Stratford, Ontario, and afterwards in Edinburgh, with *Henry V*, and that alongside of this they are to give performances of Molière in French. The first move towards an integration of English and French-Canadian dramatic culture comes from this company. They are prepared to act both in French and in English; and I must say that I did not find this readiness

on the part of French-Canadians to appreciate what the English-speaking theatre had to give them reciprocated at the English end of St. Catherine Street.

I have always agreed with Dr. Tyrone Guthrie that the difference between the amateur and the professional stage is chiefly monetary. But of course the amateur has his own temptations and these were apparent in the competitions which I judged. You had an experienced director who would try to get by with an interesting *mise-en-scène*. Nothing is easier than to play around with lights because lights generally do what you tell them. It is much easier than playing around with actors, who are not nearly so docile. I remember a performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*, directed by Mr. Robertson Davies, whose own play, *Fortune my Foe*, I had much admired. This had exposed, a little pessimistically perhaps, the dilemma of Canadian culture incessantly bribed from the United States. The production of *The Taming of the Shrew* had every merit except acting. It was brilliantly imagined according to a quasi-Elizabethan formula; ingenious and inventive; lively and audacious; sending a new wind of sheer exhilaration through the rather dusty corridors of the play. But almost no one in it, except for Mrs. Davies, who played Katherine, had been taught to speak; and I know that my friend Mr. Philip Hope-Wallace who judged the production at the finals felt the same thing. The despotism of the director was getting the better of actors with an insufficient technique. In general, however, I found very little complacency among the groups that I judged, but I did sometimes feel that the fevers of competition were paralysing the natural development of the dramatic movement. Up to a point this excitement was healthy; but after that point it became febrile.

I must not leave you with the impression that there was no professional theatre in Canada, even during those lean years. Mr. Malcolm Morley, an Englishman who helped to run the little Everyman Theatre in Hampstead during the 'twenties, had spent some time in Canada, producing and adjudicating; and when I went out in 1948 he was just starting a repertory theatre in Ottawa. He was good enough to ask me to stay on and act in this, but I was not able to do so. Then there was the enterprising Brian Doherty who had toured the old melodrama, *Murder in the Red Barn*, right through the Dominion. There were also visits to Toronto and London, Ontario, by English and American companies. The Sadler's Wells Ballet, in particular, scored a tremendous success. Already, however, Montreal was beginning to be omitted from these circuits. At His Majesty's, its largest theatre, so I was given to understand, you could always count on a large audience of rats, but this company came to be considered distasteful both by the actors on the stage and by the spectators in the auditorium. Meanwhile the radio was growing in scope and influence. The C.B.C. provided an ample and, on the whole, intelligent programme of plays. And television was imminently looming. The costs of touring were prohibitive, and the only hope for the theatre that I could see, when I left Canada in 1950, was a chain of repertory theatres in the larger towns, drawing their strength from the local dramatic groups, enabling these to turn professional, and surviving on whatever subsidies the Federal or the State Governments might provide. I had the

pleasure of staying with Mr. Massey while the investigations for his cultural commission were still in progress, and it was my hope, as I know it was his, that one result of this would be an increased support for the theatre.

The nations of the British Commonwealth have been very slow to wake up to the importance of subsidizing the arts. These are still felt to be a luxury, not a necessity, of civilized living. The other day I was lecturing in the old University town of Heidelberg. This is about half the size of Oxford, and yet it receives in annual grants a subsidy for its opera and theatre equivalent to £100,000. And yet the Oxford Playhouse is being threatened with imminent extinction, because it cannot live on a grant of £5,000. The comparison is flagrant and shameful. A community must decide what it thinks important and support those things against the challenge of merely commercial competition. The answer, in Canada, was given, once again, not by the State but by the individual. Perhaps it is better, at least at the beginning, that things should happen like this. A too-generous subsidy can possibly stifle, and easily sterilize, creative entertainment. Decisions get bogged down in committees, and committees are of their nature conservative. However, there was a gentleman in Stratford, Ontario, Mr. Tom Paterson by name, who dared to dream and dared to force his dream into reality. He had no theatrical experience, but he had served abroad in the last war, and had followed the European theatre with a good deal of intelligent appreciation. When he returned to Canada he was struck, as many other people must have been struck, by the name of the town in which he lived. The name suggested immense possibilities. Festivals were very much in the air, and thousands of Canadians would travel to Britain every summer to see the plays at Stratford, Warwickshire, and to hear the music at Edinburgh. Did he know, I wonder, how the Edinburgh Festival had been born? One summer evening during the war years Mr. Rudolph Bing, then Director of the Glyndebourne Festival and now Director of the Metropolitan Opera, New York, had been walking through the streets of the Scottish capital. Perhaps he was struck, as he looked up to the Castle on its rock, by some resemblance to Salzburg; but Salzburg was already engulfed in the nostalgic memories of a threatened or a vanished Europe. Why not turn Edinburgh into a Salzburg? And so the idea was born, and nursed into maturity by influential ladies and enterprising Lord Provosts and adventurous art councils until it had reached the dimensions that we now know.

Something of the same kind must have happened in the mind of Mr. Paterson. Why not have a festival at Stratford, Ontario, to challenge the festival at Stratford-on-Avon? He communicated his idea to the municipal bigwigs of his native town and discovered an ardent response. The next necessity was an expert consultation. So he put through a trans-Atlantic call to Dr. Tyrone Guthrie and asked him to come out and advise him. I have this in common with Dr. Guthrie that I will go anywhere if somebody will pay my fares, and Dr. Guthrie came post-haste to Canada. I call him 'Doctor', because that is what Canadians call him and I suppose he likes it. But in fact he is the least academic of men. Ingenious and inventive, original and irreverent, his passion for sheer entertainment has always been the despair of the purists. But he is the right man

for a bright idea. He began by asking the Stratford committee a number of blunt questions. Did they simply want a well-intentioned local festival; or did they wish to aim, from the very start, at the highest standard and the widest *réclame* compatible with the best performance? The answers to these questions were encouraging. They wished to present Shakespeare with Canadian actors, stiffened by two or three experienced actors from the British stage. They wished Dr. Guthrie himself to direct the plays and to inspire the enterprise.

But Stratford had no theatre, and this lack was of course the festival's supreme opportunity. It met, providentially, Dr. Guthrie's matured ideas about the production of Shakespeare. He had long wished to escape from the confinement and the conventions of the proscenium stage; to bring the audience into more direct and organic relation with the play; to recover, as far as possible, the conditions under which the plays were originally presented. There was no question of rebuilding a Ye Olde Globe Theatre in the pastures of Ontario. What was needed was a theatre of original design which would produce the same effect and generate the same excitement and intimacy as we must suppose the Elizabethan structures to have achieved in the past. Tradition there would be, but not the tradition of the nineteenth-century bourgeois playhouse; rather, the freer and more ceremonial traditions of the first Elizabethan age.

This, of course, was exactly the right approach for a new enterprise. A concrete auditorium was laid down; a stage, designed by Tania Moisewitch, a free adaptation of the Elizabethan pattern, would be built; and the audience would be protected from the noise of hooting motor-cars and screaming children, and from the nuisance of nocturnal mosquitos, by a tent larger than any known in the history of mankind. Such a tent existed, or could be manufactured in Chicago, and a magician of the name of Mr. Skip Manley could not only call it into being but could actually get it put up. So the plans were laid and Dr. Guthrie had returned to England, where he secured the services of Mr. Alec Guinness and Miss Irene Worth for the projected festival. After long discussion it was decided to present *Richard III* and *All's Well that Ends Well*, the second of these plays in modern dress. *Richard III* had the advantage of giving a great spectacular part to Mr. Guinness, and many other parts, none of them too onerous, to the Canadian actors who would be supporting him. *All's Well that Ends Well* had the advantage of being a little known play and therefore not challenging comparison with recent productions in more conventional settings. Also it lent itself to modern dress; Helena only began to make sense if one envisaged her as a contemporary feminist. The modern costumes not only suited the play but saved the exertions of the wardrobe which would have all its work cut out to provide a colourful pageant for *Richard III*. A technical staff was set up in Stratford and two central European immigrants were discovered in Toronto who could make the shoes for *Richard* and the boots for *All's Well*, when all the larger firms had refused to consider the order because it did not conform to any schedule known to their assembly line. It was hoped that this production would appeal to the masses, but it was not going to be mass-produced.

The next job was the recruiting of Canadian talent. Hundreds of actors

volunteered their services and agreed to hold themselves free for the weeks of rehearsal and performance. Dr. Guthrie saw them and talked to them and eventually left the choice to his assistant, Mr. Colin Clarke. Much talent was unused, but that was only because so much had been offered. The festival, however, was anything but plain sailing. The subscriptions did not by any means keep pace with the costs, and at one moment in the spring of 1953 the alternatives of cancellation or postponement were discussed. Dr. Guthrie received another trans-Atlantic call which caused him to mop his brow. Either they must go on, he decided, or they must cancel. The committee decided, gallantly, to go on. Later the subscriptions came in, handsomely and sometimes anonymously, and as soon as the tickets were on sale it was realized that the idea of Stratford, Ontario, had caught on—as things only catch on in the New World—with the rapidity of a forest fire. There were still crises to surmount. When would the fabulous tent arrive? It had been used for a mass baptism in Chicago, and would shortly be required in Venezuela. But would it be put up in time, even with the help of Mr. Skip Manley's magic wand? And even when it was in place, the acoustics of the theatre were found to be so bad that, while a whisper from outside the tent reverberated like a whisper in the dome of St. Paul's, the actors who were talking to each other inside, very often quite loudly, were perfectly inaudible. This defect was solved by putting down coconut matting all over the floor of the auditorium—a solution of ingenuity and commonsense rather than of acoustic *expertise*.

I need not relate the further story of Stratford's success. It only remains to note that it has given the Canadian theatre just the tonic it needed after years of tentative experiment and increasing frustration. Already it is depending on Canadian actors for its principal parts, developing a Canadian style of playing, and only calling upon the English theatre for its new director, Mr. Michael Langham, and relying, as always, upon Dr. Guthrie's artistic advice. But perhaps the most important thing of all about it, the thing which may give it a unique place in theatrical history—is that it has made popular the Elizabethan method. I do not believe, myself, that this method will ever become widely acceptable in this country. We are too tied to our conventions and too proud of the triumphs we have achieved inside them. Memories of this or that performance, of this or that production, memories of the Old Vic and Stratford-on-Avon, longer memories of the Lyceum—interfere with our readiness to accept a fundamental change. We have the theatres, and we have the scene designers clamouring to show their skill; we are visually minded. Can we ever return, willingly, to the simplicities of the Elizabethan pattern? I doubt it. You will notice that when Shakespeare is given on the open stage of the Assembly Hall at Edinburgh, the critics are not particularly welcoming. I acted on it myself a year ago in a play by Thornton Wilder, also directed by Dr. Guthrie. I found the experience fascinating. I enjoyed the freedom and the fluidity and the direct contact with the audience. But I am not at all sure that the audience enjoyed it as much as I did. English audiences like to look at their plays through a frame, although they are quite ready to accept a projecting apron and a simultaneous *décor*.

But you cannot have a really Elizabethan production without a really Elizabethan audience, and it is just this audience that the Stratford festival seems to have raised up into being. Many of its members have never seen a live theatrical performance before, and their ideas of what a Shakespeare play should look and sound like were quite unencumbered by tradition. I was told of a lady who sat breathless on the edge of her seat during *The Merchant of Venice*, because she did not know how the trial scene was going to end. Many years ago, when I was producing a play for the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, I was told of a company of professional actors who had played before the students. One of them had remarked: 'Yes, I like the round actors best'. At Stratford, Ontario, the audience were quite prepared to applaud the round actors in a round theatre.

I have left myself little space to discuss the renaissance of ballet in Canada. Here there are three names that have to be remembered, and here, too, we find a fruitful mingling of amateur and professional effort. The chief pioneers were Boris Volkoff, a Toronto ballet teacher who established the Volkoff Ballet in 1938, and Miss Gweneth Lloyd who founded the Winnipeg Ballet in 1939. The Winnipeg Ballet quickly progressed to a semi-professional status and became a fully professional company in 1950. In 1952 it earned the right to style itself the Royal Winnipeg Ballet; it had played before the late King and Queen on their visit to Winnipeg in 1939. In 1948 the first Canadian Ballet Festival was held in Winnipeg with three companies presenting their works: the Volkoff Canadian Ballet, the Winnipeg Ballet and the Ruth Sorel Ballet from Montreal. Subsequent festivals were held in Toronto and elsewhere. And there were no less than 11 companies competing in Toronto. No doubt there was much in these programmes to disconcert the expert balletomane, but I know of no other country in the world where amateur ballet reached anything like these proportions of popularity.

To-day there are two professional companies now dancing before the Canadian public—the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the National Ballet Company. The second of these was formed in 1950 by the National Ballet Guild of Toronto and has for artistic director an English dancer, Miss Celia Franca, of considerable distinction. I first met Miss Franca when I was playing at Covent Garden in *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1948. She was then a member of the Metropolitan Ballet Company, which provided the not quite necessary choreographic decoration to the homespun of Bunyan's adapted allegory. We used to chat together at the side of the stage, and I was delighted to find, when I was briefly in London, Ontario, the winter before last, what a personality she had become in the Canadian cultural scene. She has shown remarkable talent in re-staging the works of the standard classic repertory.

As I bring this very fragmentary survey to a close I should like to express myself in agreement with Dr. Guthrie when he says that the Stratford Festival—and to that I should like to add the whole of the Canadian dramatic effort, both amateur and professional—should strengthen itself consistently by the production of classical plays. I have no doubt that a distinctive Canadian drama will emerge in conformity with the development of Canadian life. Its problems, and also its

poetry, will demand dramatic expression. Already the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde has discovered some interesting native dramatists in Quebec, and I have referred to the interesting work of Mr. Robertson Davies. What is to be avoided, I feel, is a slavish imitation of English or American models; the preference for plays dealing with the surfaces of social life to those which examine and illuminate fundamental human issues. There is everything to be gained and nothing to be lost by the performance of the classics—Shakespeare, Molière, Chekov, and others. No professional actor can be said to be properly equipped, and certainly none can now attain an important status, unless he has been tested by performance in the great classical parts; just as no pianist can pretend to eminence unless he can play Beethoven or Schubert with some show of competence. The Stratford company, and other professional companies that one hopes will come into being under the spur of its example, will lose nothing of their distinctive Canadian quality if they measure themselves against the classics. This is the only sure foundation and whether one looks to Ontario or to Quebec it is an encouraging sign that the architects of the Canadian theatre are building upon it.

If Canadian actors have been lured to London, British actors have been lured to Canada. Mr. Douglas Campbell and his wife, Miss Ann Casson, had the exciting idea of putting on Shaw's *St. Joan* without scenery and virtually without costumes. Thus lightly accoutred, they were able to bring the play to remote audiences at a very low cost. Now, they are doing the same thing with other plays. Here again, the simplest and the boldest solution is the most successful. And it is just these qualities of courage in conception and simplicity in execution which earn their reward in a new country, where the grip on reality in life is asking to be matched by the grip on reality in art. I have little doubt that Canadians are rising to this challenge, and that in the theatre, as elsewhere, we shall be surprised by the maturity and vigour of their response.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Royal Society of Arts, and this company, which I see is in large part Canadian, are very much in your debt this afternoon for the very brilliant and exciting talk about the state of theatre and ballet in Canada. An hour's lecture about Canada, without mentioning oil and uranium, is really rather an event these days, but the report, appreciation and criticisms that Mr. Speaight has brought back with him are extraordinarily heartening for the future development of these arts in the country.

I would just like to say, beyond expressing our thanks again for this extremely interesting hour, that I look back in retrospect and say that I can appreciate, when listening to Mr. Speaight, just what he calls the coming and going between this country and Canada, and between Canada and France, in the field of theatrical production criticism. The months that he and his colleagues have cheerfully come out to spend year after year in helping to make the Dominion Drama Festival, and more recently the Stratford project, the lively and valuable creations they are, is itself a very important and useful link between the life of Canada and the life in the countries of this world. I would like the audience to join again in expressing our grateful appreciation to Mr. Speaight for his very brilliant talk this afternoon.

A vote of thanks to the Lecturer was carried with acclamation.

SIR SELWYN SELWYN-CLARKE, K.B.E., C.M.G., M.C. (Chairman, Commonwealth Section Committee): First of all, I should like to take the opportunity of saying how

very welcome Lady Pigott is with us this afternoon. Through Lady Pigott's generosity this course of the Neil Matheson McWharrie Lectures is given. I should also like to say how welcome Miss Scott Rogers is because it was she who inspired Lady Pigott to make this generous gesture. Then again, Your Excellency, I should like to join with you in saying how very welcome the Canadian contingent are here to-day. We do not often find such a representative gathering from your Dominion. Now I am quite sure that we owe a great deal of this, the presence of so many Canadian friends here to-day, to our good friend Miss Mary Macgillivray, who is Your Excellency's representative on the Commonwealth Committee of the Royal Society of Arts, and so I should like to thank, in the name of the Committee, Miss Mary Macgillivray, not only for this representative gathering, but for all the contributions which she makes to the Committee.

I am sure that all members of the audience will agree with me that the masterly and by no means fragmentary description of Canadian theatre and ballet given to us by Mr. Robert Speaight is a fitting *finale* to our Commonwealth meetings this Session. You have indicated that by your applause. Now I want you to help me to say how very grateful we are to His Excellency, Mr. Norman Robertson, for coming to us, the second time I think in his reign as High Commissioner for Canada in this country, to preside over our proceedings this afternoon. Thank you very much, Sir.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman was carried with acclamation, and the meeting then ended.

G E N E R A L N O T E S

SOME CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

The fascinating exhibition of paintings and drawings by some of Heinemann's authors, lately opened by Mr. Somerset Maugham at the Army and Navy Stores, Victoria Street, is due to close this Saturday, 27th October. Interested readers who cannot visit the collection in time may doubtless be able to discover items through the agency of the publishers, whose relationship with their distinguished authors has been so intimate and fruitful. Max's representation of himself as an indigent caller at 21 Bedford Street, and another of his caricatures in the exhibition entitled *Triennial negotiations between Mr. Heinemann and Mr. Hall Caine*, illustrate this agreeable relationship with urbane and playful wit.

Max Beerbohm, of course, was a stylist who could express himself with equal felicity in prose and pictorial comment; and his old friend, Mr. Gordon Craig, is another exhibitor equally at ease as author and pictorial creator of austere and imposing stage designs that revolutionized, as we know, the art of the theatre. Naturally, few of this company can claim the double mastery; and the spiritless competence of a number of authors' pictures prompts, indeed, the reflection that artists have generally brought more freshness to literature than authors have to painting. Even so, one is several times arrested: by the strange intensity, for example, of D. H. Lawrence's groups, that have something of the disturbing primitiveness of Gauguin's islanders, very different from the exotic effects of Mr. Coward's Jamaican scenes that are pleasantly diverting after their 'neo-primitive' fashion.

Another distinctive exhibition, quite outside the run of West End shows, is that styled *Picasso, himself*, which has only just opened at the gallery of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Dover Street; to be precise, on 25th October, Picasso's seventy-fifth birthday: an occasion which has prompted his friend, Mr. Roland Penrose, to bring together a remarkable collection of all manner of souvenirs of the unpredictable master who has been a *stupor mundi* for as long as most of us can remember. Photographs, letters, envelopes characteristically embellished with coloured crayons,

these, with many unfamiliar works by Picasso are assembled, together with originals from such distinguished hands as André Derain, Modigliani, Marie Laurencin, Signor di Chirico and M. Jean Cocteau. In the result, every stage of Picasso's life is represented, from the obscurity of his bohemian café existence in the 'nineties to his closely guarded activities to-day in the Villa de Californie above Cannes. It is an absorbing and revealing miscellany.

Had Pablo Picasso never been, Parisian painting would assuredly be wearing a different complexion to-day. His pictorial language has become, in truth, an international mode of expression, and his inventions already appear debased in the hands of stylish followers. His influence is evident in a collection of highly assured paintings, for the most part by Parisian contemporaries, entitled *Le Tour des Ateliers*, at Tooth's Gallery in Bruton Street. How widespread has become the School of Paris is shown in two stylized paintings of horsemen by Signor Marino Marini, best known for his abruptly formalized bronzes, and in the modish and heraldic paintings of kings by Señor Antoni Clavé, a native of Barcelona. There is no lack of virtuosity in the Parisians proper. M. Venard diversifies the texture of his decorative still-lives by incising lines while the paint was still moist, and the fashionable M. Bernard Buffet strikes his calculated note of starkness in a flower-piece here. More to my taste, however, are the formalized arrangements of table objects, fastidious in texture, from the hand of young M. Philippe Bonnet.

Overseas Fellows of this Society, within reach of New York, may well feel tempted to visit an exhibition of contemporary British art, inspired by Sir John Rothenstein, which has been brought to the Silberman Galleries, and will remain in Madison Avenue until 18th November. One American criticism of this collection is that it perpetuates the notion that British artists are producing nothing but highly romantic or abstract art, and ignores altogether the post-war development of social realism. That is true enough, and one could wish that such younger inventive realists as Messrs. Middleditch, Smith, Bratby, and Greaves, who won golden opinions this summer at the Venice Biennale, had been represented in this New York exhibition.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that collections of British art abroad—such as those toured by the British Council—have made their greatest impact on foreign visitors when the number of exhibitors has been strictly limited, and made to appear, so far as possible, homogeneous. Catholicity may be admirable at home, but it is apt to spell confusion abroad. Certainly the dozen contributors to the present show go well enough together, if one excepts Sir Jacob Epstein, who would appear an isolationist in any company, and here infuses the much needed warmth and vitality of his humanism. Henry Moore, F. E. McWilliam, and Lynn Chadwick are the sculptors calculated to demonstrate our progressiveness to a public avid for innovation, and the painters are led, expectedly, by the much travelled Graham Sutherland and Ben Nicholson.

NEVILLE WALLIS

JOHN NASH MEMORIAL

The first public commemoration of John Nash's signal contributions to the 'Metropolitan Improvements' of the Regency period in London took place on Thursday, 18th October, when a memorial to him was unveiled at All Souls Church, Langham Place, by the Right Honble. Patrick Buchan-Hepburn, P.C., M.P., Minister of Works.

The memorial, which is in the form of a portrait bust of Nash, has been carved in Portland stone by Mr. Cecil Thomas, O.B.E., F.R.B.S., from a plaster bust in the possession of the Royal Institute of British Architects. The original, in marble, was by William Behnes, and is thought almost certainly to have been a portrait from life. Sited as it is in the portico of the only London church of Nash's design, built between 1822-1825, the memorial stands on the axis of his London development.

It was the restoration of the Nash Terraces in Regents Park, and the bicentenary in 1952 of his birth, which emphasized the lack of any public memorial of this type. Yet Nash's genius was behind the whole plan for Regents Park and the West End, which constituted the developments known as the Metropolitan improvements. The St. Marylebone Society, under the chairmanship of the late Alderman A. E. Reneson Coucher, O.B.E., L.C.C., proposed that steps be taken to rectify this, and the Memorial Committee, of which the Mayor of St. Marylebone was Chairman, was subsequently set up. On this Committee the Royal Society of Arts, of which Nash was elected a Member in 1792, was represented by Mr. Oswald P. Milne, J.P., F.R.I.B.A.

IMPERIAL INSTITUTE

A new permanent exhibition on the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was opened by Sir Gilbert Rennie, G.B.E., K.C.M.G., M.C., High Commissioner for the Federation in London, at the Imperial Institute, South Kensington, on 5th October, 1956. The exhibition, which has been designed by Mr. Richard Levin, O.B.E., F.S.I.A. in co-operation with the Institute and Rhodesia House, is planned for teaching purposes, and tells the story of the Federation visually, by means of dioramas, maps, and diagrams. History and government, the land and its people, the agricultural and mineral resources of the three component countries, and industrial development, forestry and communications are dealt with in four sections. Although not yet quite completed, the exhibition is intended to be used for teaching purposes in the present term, and already presents a clear and easily followed picture of life in the Federation, of which it is, in fact, the first permanent exhibition.

OBITUARY

MR. R. B. FISHENDEN

We record with regret the death, in London on 7th October, of Mr. R. B. Fishenden, O.B.E., M.Sc., at the age of 76.

Sir Francis Meynell, R.D.I., writes:

R. B. Fishenden was editor of *The Penrose Annual* when he died, as he had been for 35 years. He had made it not only a handsome and articulate record of each year's technical developments in printing but also a forum for discussion, criticism and suggestion about the art of typography as distinct from the mechanisms of printing. One emphasizes this part of his many activities because his commercial experience with, successively, leading firms of block-makers, letter founders, papermakers and finally publishers (he was technical editor of the King Penguin series) came to its fine flowering in the perspicacity of his editorship of *Penrose*. Other journals about printing—*The Fleuron*, *Signature*, *Alphabet & Image*—have come, rendered a great service, and gone. Fishenden's *Penrose* remained for a third of a century in his always eager and interested hands: and is a rich legacy for his successor whoever he may be.

Richard Fishenden was by nature, by education and by employment a technician, but by discipline and experience he became also a man of taste. The record of his work, and principally the changes he gradually wrought in *The Penrose Annual*, stand as proof of these qualities in him. What can never show in the record is the quality of heart, of warm and generous feeling, of ready gratitude, which was his specially and characteristically. He was equally a willing almoner and a willing beggar of ideas, so it be that the cause of printing was likely to be advanced. It was an honour and an obligation to receive his requests and have his confidence—which was so guileless that it quite forbade a guileful evasion. I have never known a more selfless man.

Mr. Fishenden was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1935.

26TH OCTOBER 1956

OBITUARY

MR. ALAN ST. H. BROCK

We also record with regret the death, in Hertfordshire on 18th October, of Mr. Alan St. H. Brock, at the age of seventy.

Alan St. Hill Brock, A.R.I.B.A., was a Director of Messrs. Brock's Crystal Palace Fireworks, Ltd., and in December, 1950, he delivered the Dr. John Mann Juvenile Lecture to the Society, on the subject of 'Fireworks'.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1951.

SHORT NOTES ON BOOKS

FROM BROAD-GLASS TO CUT CRYSTAL. *By D. R. Guttery. Leonard Hill, 1956.* 35s

Stourbridge glass has been produced for 350 years, and in this book the history of the local industry is described. Beginning with the early period of window-glass and bottle making, the development of the craft up to to-day's cut crystal is given with the aid of many half-tone illustrations.

THE LAND CALLED ME. *By Sir E. John Russell. Allen & Unwin, 1956.* 25s

Many years' work at Rothamsted Experimental Station, of which he was director for 31 years, are recounted in Sir John Russell's autobiography. His belief in the need for science to come to the aid of agriculture led him to the work, and he considerably expanded the activities of the Experimental Station, travelling in many parts of the world.

MODERN ENGLISH PAINTERS: LEWIS TO MOORE. *By Sir John Rothenstein. London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956.* 35s

Following the style of his earlier series of studies of 17 modern English painters, which appeared in 1952, Sir John Rothenstein is concerned in this book with individual painters, rather than with art movements. The critical and biographical method is used, the subjects being treated in chronological order of birth. The book is indexed and has 32 pages of photogravure plates of examples of the artists' work.

FROM THE JOURNAL OF 1856

VOLUME IV. 24th October, 1856

FEMALE EDUCATION

From an address by the Lord Mayor to the York Institute of Popular Science and Literature.

‘ . . . I am glad that the importance of female training and education is more deeply felt than it has been, and that this subject is now receiving great consideration in high and influential quarters. . . . We cannot easily overrate the importance of elevating and strengthening the female character with scientific and literary information. In my humble judgment, a female cannot be too much “a blue stocking”, provided she is also well versed in the useful common things of life. I need not expatiate upon the mighty influence for good or ill which sisters, and wives, and mothers exercise; and a cursory glance at history is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth which is couched under the poet's question, “Can man be free where woman is a slave?” While, however, we extol mental culture, we must not forget that the kitchen is as much a part of feminine dominion as the drawing-room, and a kitchen out of order is as uncomfortable to a household as a stomach out of order is to the human frame. Even those who are above the humbler classes, are ill prepared for the duties and vicissitudes of life if they have only accomplishments, and are not practically acquainted with culinary affairs, with the making and mending of articles of clothing, and with the common useful things of everyday domestic life.

Some Activities of Other Societies and Organizations

MEETINGS

SAT. 27 OCT. Horniman Museum, London Road, S.E.23. 3.30 p.m. Miss Sylvia Matheson : *Time off to Dig*.

MON. 29 OCT. Geographical Society, Royal, Kensington Gore, S.W.7. 5 p.m. E. H. Brown : *Physique of Wales*.

Imperial Institute, S.W.7. 5.45 p.m. A. Raymer : *Kenya*.

King's College, Strand, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. Dr. F. L. Carsten : *From Scharnhorst to Schleicher—the Prussian Officer-Corps in Politics*.

5.30 p.m. William Latey : *Nullity of Marriage: Law and Jurisdiction*.

TUES. 30 OCT. I.C.I. Merseyside Scientific Society, at the I.C.I. Widnes Laboratory, Lancs. 5.15 p.m. Professor E. R. Andrews : *Nuclear Magnetic Resonance*.

King's College, Strand, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. J. R. Shakeshaft : *Radio Astronomy*.

Manchester Geographical Society, 16 St. Mary's Parsonage, Manchester. 3. 6.30 p.m. Councillor B. S. Langton : *A Mancunian Looks at Leningrad*.

Textile Institute, 10 Blackfriars Street, Manchester. 3. 7 p.m. D. Tomlinson : *Trends in Textile Designing*.

WED. 31 OCT. British Foundrymen, Institute of, at the Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, W.C.2. 7.30 p.m. A. L. Parrott : *Fifty Years of Art Founding*.

Kinematograph Society, British, at the Royal Society of Arts, W.C.2. 7.15 p.m. W. D. Kemp : *Electronic Motion Picture Production for Television*.

Radio Engineers, British Institution of, at the College of Technology, Cathays Park, Cardiff. 6.30 p.m. L. E. Jansson : *Applications of Transistors to Radio Reception*.

Textile Institute, at the Hotel Metropole, Leeds. 7.30 p.m. Professor John Read : *The Life and Work of Perkin*.

Victoria & Albert Museum, S.W.7. 6.15 p.m. Professor Thomas Bodkin : *Aspects of Rembrandt*.

THURS. 1 NOV. Anthropological Institute, Royal, 21 Bedford Square, W.C.1. 5.30 p.m. Dr. Audrey I. Richards : *Some Aspects of Clan Organization among the Baganda*.

Building Centre, Store Street, W.C.1. 6 p.m. Denis Clarke Hall and Alan Adams : *Sanitary Fittings*.

Chemical Society, at the University College, Gower Street, W.C.1. 2.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. Symposium : *Newer Interpretations of Reactions and Structure in Carbohydrate Chemistry*.

King's College, Strand, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. Professor G. N. Garmonsway : *The Purpose of the Beowulf Poet*.

Metals, Institute of, at the Royal School of Mines, South Kensington, S.W.7. 7 p.m. Professor F. C. Thompson : *Primitive Metallurgy*.

Radio Engineers, British Institution of, at the College of Technology, Sackville Street, Manchester. 1. 6.30 p.m. H. W. Shipton : *Electronics Applied to Physiology*.

Royal Society, Burlington House, W.1. 4.30 p.m. E. F. Gale : *The Biochemical Organisation of the Bacterial Cell*.

FRI. 2 NOV. Cosmetic Chemists of Great Britain, Society of, at the Royal Society of Arts, W.C.2. 7.30 p.m. T. W. Watson : *Silicones in the Cosmetic Industry*.

Engineering Inspection, Institution of, at the E.L.M.A. Lighting Service Bureau, 2 Savoy Hill, W.C.2. 6 p.m. C. S. Smith : *The American Approach to Quality Control*.

Mechanical Engineers, Institute of, 1 Birdcage Walk, S.W.1. 6 p.m. P. F. Ashwood : *A Review of the Performance of Exhaust Systems for Gas-Turbine Aero Engines*.

Physical Society, at the Institute of Physics, Belgrave Square, S.W.1. 11 a.m. Discussion : *Liquid Helium*.

Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, W.1. 9 p.m. Professor Tom M. Harris : *The Investigation of a Fossil Plant*.

SAT. 3 NOV. Horniman Museum, London Road, S.E.23. 3.30 p.m. E. A. Lane : *Italian Maiolica*.

MON. 5 NOV. Engineers, Society of, at the Geological Society, Burlington House, W.1. 5.30 p.m. D. F. Collins : *Gas Turbines in theory and practice*.

Imperial Institute, S.W.7. 5.45 p.m. F. M. Mitchell : *Northern Nigeria*.

King's College, Strand, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. Professor G. H. N. Seton-Watson : *Russia—Army and Party*.

TUES. 6 NOV. Electrical Engineers, Institution of, Savoy Place, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. (1) Dr. E. H. Holt : *Electric Strength of Highly Compressed Cases*; (2) Dr. P. R. Howard : *Insulation Properties of Compressed Electro-Negative Gases*.

Geographical Society, Royal, Kensington Gore, S.W.7. 5 p.m. Professor M. E. L. Mallowan : *Twenty-five Years of Mesopotamian Discovery*.

Japan Society, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, S.W.7. 6 p.m. Mrs. H. Orr-Ewing : *Geisha*.

Manchester Geographical Society, 16 St. Mary's Parsonage, Manchester. 3. 6.30 p.m. J. B. Merrington : *Through France and Spain*.

Metals, Institute of, at the Cadena Cafe, Cornmarket Street, Oxford. 7 p.m. A. T. Churchman : *Radiation Damage*.

WED. 7 NOV. Chemical Engineers, Institution of, at the Royal Institution, Albemarle Street, W.1. 3 p.m. Symposium : *Grinding*.

Junior Institution of Engineers, at the James Watt Memorial Institute, Great Charles Street, Birmingham. 7 p.m. E. A. Matthews : *Developments in Amateur Radio During the Last Decade*.

Kinematograph Society, British, at the Royal Society of Arts, W.C.2. 7.15 p.m. N. F. Chapman : *The use of 16mm Film in Television*.

Petroleum, Institute of, 26 Portland Place, W.1. 5.30 p.m. Symposium : *Digital Computers in the Petroleum Industry*.

Radio Engineers, British Institution of, at the Chamber of Commerce, 1 Old Hall Street, Liverpool. 3. 7 p.m. J. E. H. Brace and R. Swinden : *Industrial Television*.

Textile Institute, Electricity Showrooms, Union Street, Oldham. 7.30 p.m. D. N. Jones : *Textiles in the Investigation of Crime*.

Victoria & Albert Museum, S.W.7. 6.15 p.m. Sir Hugh Casson : *Beauty in Danger*.

THURS. 8 NOV. Electrical Engineers, Institution of, Savoy Place, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. J. Eccles : *Visit of the British Electricity Supply Delegation to the Soviet Union*.

Engineering Designers, Institution of, 38 Portland Place, W.1. 6.45 p.m. D. E. Broadbent : *The Demands of Efficient Human Reaction on Engineering Design*.

King's College, Strand, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. R. Fletcher : *"The Dodekatalogue of the Gipsy" of Costi Palamas*.

Metals, Institute of, at the Birmingham Exchange and Engineering Centre, Stephenson Place, Birmingham. 6.30 p.m. A. J. K. Honeyman : *The Metallurgy of Steel for Deep Drawing and Pressing*.

Radio Engineers, British Institution of, at the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders, 39 Elmwood Crescent, Glasgow. 7 p.m. R. K. Vinycomb : *The Oscilloscope for Engine Testing*.

Wool Education Society, at the Royal Society of Arts, W.C.2. 7 p.m. Patrick Early : *The History of the Witney Blanket Industry*.

FRI. 9 NOV. Industrial Artists, Society of, Birmingham Exchange and Engineering Centre, Stephenson Place, Birmingham. 2. 7.30 p.m. Discussion : *The Volkswagen Story*.

Junior Institution of Engineers, 14 Rochester Row, S.W.1. 7 p.m. J. C. Y. Baker : *Some Aspects of Repairs to Airframes*.

Kinematograph Society, British, at the Lighting Service Bureau, 2 Savoy Hill, W.C.2. 7.30 p.m. Norman Leevens : *Maintenance*.

Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, W.1. 9 p.m. Sir Charles Dodds : *The Chemical Substances Influencing Mental and Physical Development*.

SAT. 10 NOV. Chemical Engineers, Institution of, Reynolds Hall, College of Technology, Manchester. 3 p.m. H. Holdsworth : *Animal foodstuff plant—some considerations*.

Horniman Museum, London Road, S.E.23. 3.30 p.m. C. J. Dunn : *The Japanese Puppet Theatre*.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

NOW UNTIL 18 NOV. Imperial Institute, S.W.7. 1.15 p.m. Payne : *Exhibition of Paintings*.

WED. 31 OCT. The Building Centre, Store Street, W.C.1. 12.45 p.m. Film Show : (1) *Changing Practices in Building*; (2) *Building Houses*.